12-2020

Portrayals of Hashtag Activism in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of #NOVATONEDUCATION Citizen Movement in Bangladesh

Umana Anjalin
University of Tennessee, uanjalin@vols.utk.edu

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Umana Anjalin entitled "Portrayals of Hashtag Activism in Southeast Asia: A Case Study of #NOVATONEDUCATION Citizen Movement in Bangladesh." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication and Information.

Sally McMillan, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Catherine Luther, Courtney Childers, Elizabeth Johnson

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Portrayals of Hashtag Activism in Southeast Asia:

A Case Study of #NOVATONEDUCATION Citizen Movement in Bangladesh

A Dissertation Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Umana Anjalin

December 2020

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to the Bangladeshi youth activists who have proven their stance in

#NoVATonEducation.

"Viva la revolución!"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My parents, Anjuman Ara Begum and Masud Alam Siddiqui, have all the credit behind what I am today. Without their support, I would not have existed, and without their help, I would not be able to finish my education abroad. I would like to thank my brother, Tariq Masrur, for always telling me to make our parents proud. Next, I would like to thank my best friend, Mirza Sadrul Alam, aka Shelly, who traveled so many times from Bangladesh to keep me company. I would like to write a few lines of gratitude to my confidante, Emran Ansari, also named Bobby, who believed in my abilities and always wanted to keep my spirits up high during my roller-coaster ride of a PhD. My cousin, Dr. Iftekhar Anam, who, being the legend of the country, has always been my inspiration.

My dissertation chair and my committee members have been tough yet very helpful in their guidance in directing this research right from scratch. Without their sincere and very kind help, I would not have progressed thus far. Last but not least, I am indebted to my co-researchers and very good comrades, Dr. Sohel Zaman and Dr. Abhijit Mazumdar, who always gave me good advice regarding the journey of PhD.

ABSTRACT

During 2015, the government of Bangladesh imposed value added tax (VAT) on private university education in order to expand the purview of revenue collection. Fearing this additional hike in the tuition fees, thousands of mostly middle class students protested that this would add to the already existing burden on their families in supporting their education. The country's socioeconomic backdrop of culture and economic scenario was such where the parents had to bear a lot for their children's expenses for a long time until the children became independent. On top of such already overpriced expenses, the question of bearing VAT became exorbitant for the families. Therefore, the question of this added cost became a burning issue that the student activists chose to fight. The students vowed to continue peaceful protests and demonstrations until their demands were met. Activism found a new dimension with digital and social media. A literature review was conducted to explore the existing research regarding the issue in question and to identify any research gaps.

When looking at the recent developments in the scenario of fundamental freedom, the countries once thought as invulnerable to authoritarian temptations are now imposing restrictions on basic rights and autonomy. Thanks to digital media and advancements in technology, the conversation on the internet, especially via social media, changed the mode of public conversation for good. This research incorporated the Southeast Asian perspective of activism in creating a desirable change in public opinion and the resultant policy reform as the after-effect of widespread dissension. This research revolved around starting with answering research questions like how the #NoVATonEducation campaign developed over time and then presents an overview of the media communication tools that were used in the campaign, followed by a focus on the role of social media.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

I. INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia has a long history of authoritarian rule as well as a relatively weak civil society. People of this region resorted to exploring ways that social activism could bring about desirable social and political changes (Ford, 2015). Activists have fought for changes in social and political causes in areas such as ethnic and religious identity, gender, and human rights and advocacy for environmental protection (Ford, 2015; Parvanova & Pichler, 2013). In many countries of this region, state repression gave rise to social activism (Caraway, 2006) and activist cultures (Boudreau, 2004) even before the advent of social media. This region saw the emergence and mobilization of social activism and collective actions ranging from small-scale demonstrations to massive upheaval concerning social justice, political and democratic freedom, etc. (Parvanova & Pichler, 2013).

History accounts for social movements as a challenging force to institutionalized forms of political representation and complementary forces to the state (Parvanova & Pichler, 2013). The Southeast Asia region as a continuous source of political and social influx is replete with myriad examples of issues of newsworthy discourse on citizen social activism. In the past, cases of collective action and citizen social activism in this region were focused on issues like the struggle of oppressed races, the hardships of minorities, women's activism, public expression of popular opinion, economic or political upheaval (Parvanova & Pichler, 2013; Ford, 2015), etc. In the past decade, with the advent of new media, the emergence of cyber-activism has given a new dimension to the citizen movements. With increased internet penetration and growth of smartphone sales, the marginalized population of the region found a new platform in making their voices heard and in raising petitions against social injustice like corruption scandals or rape.

In these particular regions, the governments (like Vietnam, Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Philippines, and Bangladesh) have been attempting to regulate the use of the internet, curbing online freedom, and restricting social media use on various occasions(Coca, 2018; Funk, 2019; Telecompaper, 2015). These actions were taken by these governments to quiet social media influencers and to limit the influence of journalists and activists who used digital communication tools to create and influence news stories (Reporters Without Borders, n.d.; Quackenbush, Solomon, F., Regan, Hincks, Barron and Haynes, 2018;Zafar, 2020). In 2015, the government of Bangladesh made a range of social media apps inaccessible to the public for an indefinite period on the grounds of national security. However, the internet users in Bangladesh could successfully dodge the government ban on certain social media networks like Facebook, Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, and a host of other messaging and calling applications. They defied the blockade on social media usage by accessing private networks, while others made a breakthrough in gaining access with proxy servers (Ahamed, 2015; Colhoun, 2015; Islam, 2015). The governments in countries like these have the ability to declare online content appearing in their borders illegal anytime. This can cause multinational companies and social media platforms to face a quandary about how to balance their commitment to free speech with the legal, political, and commercial realities. Especially, social media companies struggle to support an open internet in those countries while obliging censorship requests to continue operation (Peel et al., 2017).

The millennial generation of the Southeast Asia region is now turning causes into shaping movements of success. This influential generation is making an impact on the sociopolitical changes in the region. According to UNDP Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and Southeast Asia Report (2014), the Generation Y (the millennial) of Southeast Asia, while having

a different set of values and outlook than that of the older generations, are more inclined towards autonomy and self-expression (ISSSUU, 2014). They have less faith in "institutional trust" such as the judiciary, police, mainstream media and the policy-making bodies. They identify less with the political parties than their older cohorts, yet they identify more with lobbying and activism (Diehl, 2015; Gottfried & Barthel, 2015).

Problem Statement

Activism has found a new dimension with digital and social media and the younger generation is more in sync with making new changes via digital/social media activism. Like many other Southeast Asian regions discussed above, the youth of the Indian subcontinent have adopted this new method of connectivity and are relying upon social media in particular as a face of protests (Verma, 2017; Roy, 2019). However, there is little literature related to social media activism on the Indian subcontinent for sociopolitical change or advocacy for distribution of social privileges. The study will address the following problem statement.

How did the people resort to digital activism in influencing public opinion for demanding a desirable change in the existing social privileges of fundamental rights like education in Southeast Asia?

A literature review following this problem statement will be conducted to explore the existing research regarding the issue in question and to identify research gaps. This exploration will also enable the researcher to propose an appropriate methodology for this research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Citizen Activism via the Digital Media

When looking at the recent developments in the scenario of fundamental freedoms, the countries once thought as invulnerable to authoritarian temptations are now imposing restrictions on basic rights and autonomy. Interestingly, despite imposing restrictions on the rights of civil society, citizens are fighting back against the attacks on independent media and online freedom via a civil society alliance in the continuation of reclaiming their rights (Pousadela, 2018). Gender based discrimination; exclusion, poverty, and climate change are at the forefront of the contemporary citizen activism movements. Thanks to digital media and the advancement of technology, the conversation on the internet, especially via social media, changed the mode of public conversation for good (Lambert, 2008; Lundby, 2008).

Once interpreted as a trivial mode of keeping in touch with friends or an apparatus for feel-good clicking, social media became a formidable force for societal change. This media form is a way of empowering ordinary citizens to unite and to seek and promote desired changes in many ways (Sharma, 2014; Kessler, 2010). This kind of activism utilizes social media and technology to mobilize social and political movements via digital campaigns. The global generation that is "coming of age at this particular historical, cultural and technological juncture" (Jenkins et al., 2016, p. 7) connects via social media to shape public perceptions, change social norms, and fight for causes.

Young People and Online Social Activism

Today's younger generation is quite engaged when it comes to news consumption. They are the millennial who were born after 1980 (Fry, 2018; TechTarget, 2018), and the first generation to reach adulthood in the new millennium (TechTarget, 2018). They are interested

and engaged individuals when it comes to political activities (Smith, 2013) on social networking news feeds (American Press Institute, 2015; Echelon Insights, 2016; Smith, 2013) as they keep abreast regularly of the latest happenings in the world. The news sources literally are in their pockets since these youngsters mostly are connected to the internet via their smartphones. News ranks relatively high in their daily list of popular online pursuits and is fairly important for social and civic engagement. Some examples of political engagement via social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter include: "liking," promoting, posting, reposting materials related to political or social issues, encouraging others to take action regarding those issues, belonging to a political/social group, and following elected officials or candidates. Many of them share political news and information via new media and trust more of the political contents when it is shared by a friend in their social network (Echelon Insights, 2016).

Earlier the dominant cultural form of engagement practices was participating in the mainstream politics, taking part in demonstrations, social movements, rallies, consumer boycotts, etc. (Fieldhouse et al., 2007; Van Biezen et al., 2012; Loader et al., 2014). Today, online activism via social media is a novel addition to the act of demonstration. However, the influx of political engagement in social media is not limited to the act of protest. Politicians are banking on new media for engaging with the contemporary politically engaged populace. Social networking turned into a promising route for the politicians as well to associate with others and listen to those who may be upset and distressed— and actually make a move afterward (Moyer, 2017).

The current study will focus on social media citizen activism among young people of a Southeast Asian developing country, Bangladesh, and will explore how the younger generation of this Southeast Asian country uses digital media (i.e., social media in particular) to reach out to

a greater audience to engage and advocate for a demand concerning social issues. The following section will reflect on how social media activism acted as a crucial means of the mobilization of protests via citizen journalism in Bangladesh despite the curbed freedom of the press, why this alternative media is important, and how this novel means of protest became a valuable addition to public discourse.

Social Media Activism as a Response to Repression

In Bangladesh's brief history of independence after 1971, the media has been found to be partial to either of the two dominant political parties who ruled the country alternately ever since its inception. Eminent journalists, while outlining the saga of their harassment by the government, often term this persecution as "farcical" acts intentionally conducted through the government's misuse of "vague laws" (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2020).

According to the veteran journalists of this country, the height of state repression regarding the freedom of the press made most of the journalists wary of what they published. The government of Bangladesh is vigilant about the citizens' media usage, and previously under section 57 of the Bangladesh Digital Communication Act and the current monitoring/surveillance under the Digital Security Act, any citizen could be subject to police arrest without a warrant (Latin American Herald Tribune, 2020; Star Online Report, 2018). The exercise of punitive measures could be contingent on any media that apparently attacks the religion or undermines the state. Despite the curbed freedom of the press, there has been a major shift in the arena of freedom of speech, where citizen journalism has come to the forefront, intimidating the ruling class (The Daily Star, 2017).

Since the year 2015, Bangladesh is witnessing the power of social media in the country (Karim, 2015; Star Online Report, 2017; Zaman, 2016). Young people are commonly portrayed

as politically apathetic and less concerned than previous generations regarding the political issues that involve their everyday lives and the matters that concern the society yet the contrary maybe true (American Press Institute, 2015; Jenkins et al., 2016; Palfrey &Gasser, 2010). This younger generation wants to make a change in the country via means other than voting (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010).

Importance of the Topic

Citizen participation is crucial as an alternative channel of communication and discourse, where the subject matter fails to receive attention from the mainstream media and the governing bodies. People have resorted to new media only when the conventional method of refuses to address any injustices (Rees, 2015). In this information age, technology penetration with the Internet and the use of social media by millennial as a primary organizing channel have become instrumental for movements across the political spectrum (Moyer, 2017). The netizens conceive a suitable hashtag (#) around the decisive topic. Then they resort to index, order, and accumulate the public discourse around the coherent topical thread. This allows an opportunity to protest by raising voices and making them heard (Zaber et al., 2017; Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). Any virtual liking, following, signing, joining, forwarding or clicking holds the potential for a big change.

Some social media campaigns proved quite successful despite the negative connotations regarding slacktivism or clicktivism (Tzouvara, 2016). There are examples of people living in countries that place limits on their citizens' right to express and the young generation who feel disenfranchised by the traditional and long-established political framework (Rees, 2015). Social media has also helped women to share their voice and experiences of sexual abuse. For instance, the *HarassMap* toolkit, launched in Egypt in 2010, plots reports on sexual harassment on Google Maps and offers information on support services available to the victims (Peuchaud, 2014; Liou,

2013; Ford, 2015). Women's rights activists found a new way of bringing attention to issues ignored by politicians and the mainstream media. Online activism propelled by the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was launched in 2014 to get the activists' message across that demanded the rescue of 276 girl students that were kidnapped from a government secondary school in Chibok, Nigeria (Ford, 2015; Fox News, 2014; Omeni, 2017). Social media via #SpartacusReport campaign was also revolutionary when it lent a voice to disabled people and the infirm who felt their rights were robbed once the United Kingdom government passed harsh welfare cuts through the reform of disability living allowance. The ubiquity of computer, mobile and social media platforms could cover for these disabled people's lack of mobility (Khan-Ibarra, 2014; Ryan, 2014). It may be really difficult for a person to individually protest about an issue, yet by using social media, it is relatively easier to mobilize hundreds of people to solicit for a petition simultaneously (Kessler, 2010).

Many critiques pan social media activism as 'slacktivism' which is said to be of no use since a lone tweet could rarely lead to change, yet many argue that none can bring about a change if they never get to learn about the problem in the first place. Here, disseminating information is always crucial to spreading information about a problem. Many people don't choose to participate in offline activism yet want to show their solidarity regarding a cause. 'Slacktivism' allows for that. 'Slacktivism' is a term that is defined as whenever people engage with little effort/commitment to perform simple measures yet are not wholly devoted to making a change. This act typically means logging onto social media and liking or re-tweeting or signing online petitions for a social or political cause (Muslic, 2017). People who went to the streets for a cause three decades ago may still be fighting the oppression regardless of the overpowering hurdles and lack of resources, yet in this age of information technology with social media, there

are hordes of online supporters behind an issue, even if via discourse only. Although it does not supersede the act of traditional protesting, it supplements it. Social media provides the activists more options. (Andrews, 2017).

'Slacktivism' is a pejorative term often used to vilify the act of social media participation for a social or political cause (Davis, 2011).Skeptics argue that these acts are ineffective and that they hardly result in political participation in real life, and that the enthusiasm of the novelty in this form of online activism wears off easily (White, 2010). They also argue that this is in no way comparable to that of the offline, high-risk activism that takes place on the ground (Gladwell, 2010). However, recent successful popular movements confirm a different reality. If and when people deem it legitimate and necessary that they need to redress a grievance, they put in a lot of energy and effort to publicize it. It has been revealed by the turnout of the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, or in the spread of the Black Lives Matter campaign, and the Women's March worldwide participation among so many other contemporary protest movements (Moyer, 2017). This study addresses the issue of 'slacktivism' and examines whether a simple act of showing solidarity for a particular cause could greatly alter people's perspective and bring about different reactions for meaningful change.

The study looks at the discourse of social media activists who, as fighters for change, used social media to spread awareness with a motto to communicate a vision for that change. In doing so, they used hashtags, group pages, and user-generated content as different means of the movement. This study explores how hashtag activism via social media is a way of getting the message across and its role in the movement offline. These digital activism movements are powerful tools in giving a voice to the otherwise marginalized, neglected masses and supplements the traditional forms of protests. With a case study based on social media activism,

this research takes a look at both the groups who have been ignored by political agendas and fair news coverage, as well as the younger generation who feel left out and unheard due to their country's limits to the freedom of speech. This study also addresses how a country's youth used social media as a facilitator in activism and how it worked as a key avenue in recruiting activists for a greater change (Harvey, 2014; Karim, 2015; Zaman, 2016). This study evaluates a social media campaign that achieved its primary objectives. It also explores what can be learned from social media messages and the insights revealed from key informants regarding the communication process.

Activism before and after Social Media

The act of protestation, or more generally, activism is not new. Speaking out against those in power evolved from face-to-face communication to written to social networking (Sliwinski, 2016). This section gives a brief overview of activism before and after social media with a focus on how social media tools have replaced conventional tools or practices used to disseminate information for change. This section also briefly gives an overview of the themes of some existing studies of social media activism.

Key Activism Non-Digital Tools before the Advent of New Media

Compared to earlier times of the pre-digital era, activism today via social media is less time-consuming and easier to execute (Rees, 2015). The traditional, pre-social media tools had a heavy reliance on conventional media like radio, television, newspapers, fliers/pamphlets, and word-of-mouth. The diffusion of information was harder to achieve with the slower pace of traditional communication, and the intended message reached the targets too slowly. Earlier activism required much more legwork and out-of-pocket costs in printing and disseminating banners, posters, fliers, etc. Word-of-mouth communication supplemented mass distributed

messages. In many cases, the budget was tight. Working for a cause had to be managed with little funds available. Many times, the funds towards a cause also could be subject to controversy, hesitation, and skepticism. Activists who wanted to bring change experienced difficult times (Kallevig, 2014).

When fighting for the right to speak their mother tongue for the language movement, Bengali students on the Indian subcontinent were seen carrying placards in rallies during 1948 (Chaity, 2017). In this movement, medical students used the painted posters to show dissent against the police action of gunning down protesters on February 21 in 1952 (Swapan, 2016). After the bloody onslaught of the Bengali general masses on March 25, 1971, a clandestine radio station called *Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra* (Free Bengal Radio Center) started to broadcast the Declaration of Independence and was used to increase the morale of the freedom fighters. Popular commentaries described the situations when the Pakistani Army was in a tough spot (Lohani, n.d.). A group of young Bengali eminent artists sang inspiring solo and chorus songs (Ahsan, 2004; Lohani, n.d.).

A section of Bengali student leaders and activists of an underground student political group designed the first version of the Bangladesh flag before independence, which was used in posters as a symbol during the nine month war of independence (Moitree, 2013). Activism to raise funds for the rescue of war-ravaged refugees in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) was also carried out by renowned international musicians like Beatles guitarist George Harrison and sitar maestro Ravi Shankar in a star-studded grand concert that was held at Madison Square Garden in New York City (Ingham, 2006; p. 133).

How Those Tools/Practices Changed in the Age of Social Media

For any movement to transpire, a lot of time and effort was required in the past. The Bengali students of East Pakistan rose up and protested against ruling West Pakistan in 1947 to earn the recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. They experienced bloodshed in 1952, which ultimately led to constitutional reform in 1956, and an official statement from the then Military government for the reinstatement of supporting the constitutional policy in 1959 (Al-Helal, 2012; Al-Helal, 2003; Lambert, 1959). On the other hand, a defining characteristic of alternative networking by the young citizens via social media is the manner in which they utilize it to instantly disseminate the information and share their agenda of protests across continents and national boundaries (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

The nature of activism is now much less difficult than in the past thanks to the information, communication, and technologies (ICT) and the social internet. These have brought a radical transformation in how people interact and share information. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and content sharing sites like YouTube and Instagram now are the platforms for contemporary activism (Kallevig, 2014; Rose, 2017). The e-word-of-mouth can easily be generated. Videos, pictures, and stories can be used to gain attention fast, and viral contents can spread the idea for a cause rapidly.

The networking practices as an alternative form of citizen activism surfaced with social media and other digital media like e-mail or short message services as the younger generation increasingly shows their desire for participating and interacting through the potent and influential networking platforms. Citizen journalism is taking the stage for influencing political behavior and civic engagement. Not only can key modalities and platforms like Twitter or Facebook define social media in creating the participatory, collaborative user-generated content (UGC), but

also the camera phone practices that allow snapshots on the move also come into play (Hjorth and Hendry, 2015). Today, the second-generation camera phones allow the creation of photo content using novel techniques via smartphone apps that feature in-app editing and the instantaneous dissemination and geo-tagging features across platforms which was not possible even via the first-generation camera phones (Hjorth and Hendry, 2015).

A Comparison between the Non-Digital and Digital Tools

A comparison of the traditional tools during earlier times (pre-digital era) to the tools used in the age of new media shows a subtle dissimilarity regarding permanency. Although the spirit and the fervor are similar, the hashtags and the slogans conceived and used in social media activism can never be destroyed. The nature of citizen journalism is such that the contributors can post their commentaries and analysis or engage in a debate about a story or an issue via the contemporary tools in their possession and keep the stories alive for a much longer period (Habib, 2013). During the earlier times (pre-digital era), for instance, the first makeshift monument that the medical students of Bengal built to commemorate the martyrs in the Bengali language movement in February, 1952, was demolished by the Pakistani police force soon after (Rafique, 2012; Swapan, 2016). Hashtag activism, however, is relatively permanent. It persists as long as social media users utilize it. The new form of tools like the hashtag on social media does not go away since digital footprint can never be as transient as the traditional forms of tools used earlier. Nothing ever gets deleted on the internet; anything posted is there for good (Cumbow, 2011). The governments in many countries like China, Iran, or Bangladesh have censored online content on various occasions stating national security reasons, yet the citizens in these countries were able to successfully evade these restrictions by gaining access to restricted content via

different mechanisms like private networks or proxy servers, etc. (Ahamed, 2015; Denyer, 2016; Colhoun, 2015; Islam, 2015; NCRI Staff, 2018; Schechner, 2018).

Broad Themes of Social Media Activism Studies

Even though social media activism is a relatively new phenomenon, little by little, scholars have begun to document case studies of what has been achieved by the citizens, organizations, and opinion leaders who used hashtag campaigns to address different social issues faced by marginalized populations. Here, the opinion leaders would be the country's youth icons/renowned youth leaders who have established credibility and have considerable power in persuading others through their opinion and access to a broader audience by dint of their authenticity and reach. Studies documented how marginalized communities in a remote area used hashtag activism on social media to shape the public discussion around issues that were not primarily addressed either by the media or the governing bodies. Here, online activism via social media helped bridge the gap between geographical distances and provided a collective voice online regarding the cause. The youthful diaspora in the area used social media to re-establish ties with their communities, create awareness about the basic issue, increase press coverage of the issue, and put pressure on the local government and other stakeholders responsible for providing a successful intervention for carrying out the requisite steps. The studies (Zaber et al., 2017; Grant, 2015; Jane, 2017) such as those presented below note the potential of social media for reformulating the existing power relationships and transforming society. Examples include creating awareness of riverbank erosion (Zaber et al., 2017), speaking against the stigma of public breastfeeding (Grant, 2015), instances of discrimination regarding extrajudicial citizen surveillance in response to a perceived lack of institutional remedies regarding phenomena like

'manspreading' (Jane, 2017) and other issues relating to the topics of gender, hostility, and feminist activism online.

The key concepts learned from contemporary social media activism case studies bear evidence that marginalized citizens resort to social media activism to put forward their respective concerns, be it negligence/inattention from the mainstream media and the proper authority regarding a particular cause, or be it the act of discrimination from a particularly influential group. Social media activism is a facilitator in increasing awareness, if not a breakthrough in all cases.

The 'Born Digital' Generation and what Characterizes Them

This section delineates the characteristics of the technology savvy younger generation and how they have utilized new media to address the causes that they felt needed to be addressed.

Children born after the 1980 grew up surrounded by digital technologies. This first generation of digital natives possesses some skills that make the skills of older generations obsolete in comparison. Millennial are different in how they behave—they interact, study, work, and do everything else differently from older generations. This generation is more into reading blogs than newspapers. They carry mobile devices, not just to make phone calls, but also to click pictures, surf the Net, send text messages, and listen to live music streaming. They typically have many friends, and each of them is constantly connected to the other either virtually or in real space. There is a 24/7 network that blends them with technology to a degree, and that has transformed human relationships in a crucial manner (Palfrey & Gasser, 2010).

This generation is a sharing generation. They have a predisposition to share everything, no matter how personal. For them, having a 'chat' rarely ever means talking. PayPal replaced the

concept of having a 'pen pal' as the best friend online, and 'tablet' never meant something that needs to be taken in the morning. They never need any directions to go to any place; GPS and an address are enough for them. Java does not always mean 'coffee' to them. They never need to go to a friend's house to study together and have no experience of watching a concert in a smoke-filled room. Their screens keep getting smaller while their parents' screens get bigger (Beloit College, n.d.).

Nowadays, they take part in social media activism, which is progressively assuming a greater share of responsibility in conveying many vital sociopolitical issues at the forefront of the public debate (Rigby, 2008). When this generation feels any pressing issue is ignored by the mainstream media or the government, they critique these formal channels and use any media necessary to tell the story to the global audience by capturing photos of events as they occur and posting them on the web by means of telling their firsthand accounts. With the decline of traditional infrastructure and hierarchy of news and information dissemination, new dynamics replace the old (Palfrey &Gasser, 2010). This dynamic cohort's interconnection can bring together online groups and organize offline activism (Gagnier, 2008). Technology serves as their trusted friend in facilitating their activism against authoritarian regimes, mostly having the digital natives at the forefront of the movement, leading the way (Palfrey &Gasser, 2010).

Social networking empowers prompt and collective action among millennial and gives them a platform of opportunity for their freedom of expression (Kanter &Fine, 2010). They start mobilization for any cause that they feel is just and appropriate. Research reveals that millennial are moving away from conventional forms of cause engagement and are passionate about improving the world while being consistently involved in taking action to achieve societal change. Engagement is part of their identity and day-to-day lives where they are regularizing

change, and at the same time no longer banking on the traditional institutions or the government

for a meaningful impact. Redefining the traditional labels, they see 'making a difference' as

personally gratifying (Masuda, 2017).

Why It is Important to Study Social Media Activism among This Cohort

With attaining prime adult years, the millennial generation is more interested in politics

and social issues as well as in keeping up with the latest happenings (Fromm, 2016; Greenslade,

2015). They demand that politicians listen to them and seek to get involved in the on-going, real-

time conversation since this is a 'co-creation' generation (Fromm, 2016). It is essential to study

this cohort regarding their role in making societal change according to their perspective for the

betterment of the marginal populace and their stance regarding government decisions.

With rising interest in the connection between social media and protests, it is now

imperative to examine in-depth activist potential based on new media (Betlemidze, 2016). The

following section looks into the nature of student protests while delineating the gestation of

grievance, mobilization of support, and protest behavior. The section also reflects on the primary

issues of activism throughout the world and specifically the earlier activism in Bangladesh by the

young generation.

General Focus and Issues

The Nature of Student Protests. Unlike the traditional belief and well-liked perception

that youth are indifferent to political life and quite ill-informed about contemporary happenings,

the contemporary emerging adults (ages 18-29) paint a different picture (Arnett et al., 2014).

This new difference happens when these youth seek to bring about political change or advocate

for a social petition involving a cause (Jenkins et al., 2016; Arnett et al., 2014). Not only is the

millennial generation participating in the sphere of politics by assisting protest movements but

this generation also uses social media platforms in facilitating a desired change in the cultural and social arena (Yuce et al., 2014). Today's youth worldwide, as expressive and empowered individuals are collectively now tapping into the promise offered by new media (Bennett, 2008).

Primary Issues Addressed with Activism by Students/Young People

The review of the literature suggests that the young generation of today who engage in social activism via social media often focus on core human rights issues. The spreading of the word through social networks via hashtags on some social issues is discussed below with brief examples.

Poverty. The poor suffer from extreme morbidity and mortality rates due to clean water scarcity, air contamination, heat waves, unemployment or underemployment, inability to afford basic needs, and a host of other dilemmas (Jobin-Leeds & AgitArte, 2016). Poverty has long been an issue for social activism by non-governmental (NGOs) and non-profit organizations (Dreier, 2013; Riddell &Robinson, 2002). #SpeakUpCLE is a hashtag activism campaign targeted towards making a real impact in extricating poverty from Cleveland, Ohio, in the United States (Gallant, 2016). It urges activists to take a stand against the situation of inhabitants living in abject poverty in Cleveland. It advocates for informing the leaders of the country to join hands in enabling new opportunities to address the issues of poverty by offering solutions for quality education, affordable and safe housing and healthcare, food security, job creation, etc. for this community (Admin, 2017; Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland, 2016). Another example of social media activism designed to address poverty is the web site that gathered all the campaign pictures shared on the Instagram platform using the hashtag #MealForShare. Web site visitors could "buy" the meals shared on Instagram by donating as much as they wanted to

eradicate malnutrition among the poor in Columbia. The campaign helped gather donations to buy 185 tons of food (Desreumaux, 2014).

Physical Abuse. Social Media is now being used to design campaigns for the prevention against violence toward women, child abuse and neglect (Liou, 2013; Prevent Child Abuse in America, 2009). It is now being used as a channel to inspire the youth in harnessing social change. Social media is replete with pages against domestic violence toward women. There are allegations that misogyny is buried in the social fabric of the Indian subcontinent. Many campaigns have been initiated via web-based networking media—most remarkably, the mishandled goddesses campaign. The campaign takes the Hindu goddesses off the pedestal that the people of the Hindu religion are so quick to place them on, obscuring the unyielding threshold between the sacrosanct and the worldly, yet the same people who worship these sacred women for their wealth, strength and wisdom perpetuate violence against the flesh-and-blood women they encounter in their daily lives (Homegrown, 2013). While the "like" on Facebook isn't a magic potion to wash all the viciousness away, it is a start for a significantly bigger development to make the urban communities and towns more secure for the ladies (Homegrown, 2013). In Bangladesh, some of the hashtag activism advocacy campaigns that have taken over social media against rape were: #JusticeForTonu, #JusticeForAfsana, #JusticeForRisha, etc.

War. During June 2015, a novel campaign titled 'World Beyond War' was promoted using social media. The online community supporting this cause was asked to re-tweet a meme that said, "A world beyond war *IS* really possible… I'm working to make it happen!" and asked people to join in this campaign. The hashtag was titled as #NoWar. Social media platforms were used to spread the notion that the news is worth spreading—There *IS* an alternative to war (Scarry, n.d).

Gender Issues. With the advent of social media, women are increasingly vocal regarding their rights and the power imbalances they experience compared with men (Khomami, 2017; Yuce et al., 2014). In 2017, countless women and some men spoke out about sexual harassment they encountered in their lives with the hashtag #MeToo, taking the opportunity to also tell harrowing stories of sexual assault. The overwhelming response regarding this particular hashtag demonstrates how prevalent this phenomenon is throughout the world. Other similar campaigns against violence and misogyny include #YesAllWomen, #OrangeTheWorld and #LeaveNoOneBehind (Cresci, 2014).

In Asia, Pakistani women rose up against the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII)'s proposal of men's lightly beating women "if need be" with the hashtag #TryBeatingMeLightly (Thomas, 2016). The women of Saudi Arabia achieved a surprising a breakthrough regarding their movement to establish their right to drive in their country after a relentless struggle of offline activism and their fight with their online social media campaign titled as #Women2Drive. This movement was carried out against the Saudi government's resistance to lift such an embargo (Khomami, 2017; Yuce et al., 2014; NBC News, 2017). The internet age indeed has been crucial in equipping people to deal with societal issues, with social media playing a pivotal role in democratizing feminism (Khomami, 2017).

Activism among Students/Young People in Bangladesh

This study is based on social media activism in the context of Bangladesh, and therefore it is vital to comprehend the country's history of activism and identify the transformation in the contemporary form of activism, which is now prevalent in the country. This allows tracing of the evolutionary changes that have transpired and help understand why Bangladesh is a good point of reference to identify with the fruition of activism. In particular, it concentrates on the rise of

social media activism in a country that still struggles with issues of freedom of expression (The Daily Star, 2017; Safi, 2017; Star Online Report, 2018) and availability of access (Colhoun, 2015). This section talks about the evolution of activism in the Bangladesh region starting from the British Empire until the relatively recent uprisings in the country.

Against the British Rule and Colonialism. The East India Company of Britain came to the Indian Subcontinent for business in the early seventeenth century but ultimately rose to rule the entire territory (Lal, n.d.). In 1757, by the decisive British triumph at Plassey (Lal, n.d.; Robins, 2008), the East India Company changed from a collection of brokers to rulers practicing political sway over a great extent of obliterate land of Bengal in 1765 (Lal, n.d.; Campbell &Watts, 1760). The East India Company later expanded its political rule to include much of India over the next century (Lal, n.d.).

Scores of people of the Indian subcontinent campaigned against colonial rule (Chandra, 1989). One of the notable movements was the Chittagong ordinance assault, otherwise called the Chittagong uprising. On April 18, 1930, telephone and telegraph offices and two armories were attacked from the Chittagong arsenal of police in the Bengal Presidency of British India (now in Bangladesh), which was outfitted by Indian freedom fighters. The marauders were rebels who favored armed uprisings as a way to accomplish India's autonomy from the British Raj (Chandra, 1989).

The Bengali Students' Role in the Language Movement. After the British left India, the partition of undivided India was divided into India and Pakistan. The newly independent Pakistan formed two provinces—one geographically non-contiguous wing that would be East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Like India, Pakistan also had several ethnic and linguistic groups. In 1948, the Pakistani government ordered Urdu to be the state language although an estimated 54-

56 percent of the population spoke Bengali (Global Non Violent Action Database, n.d.; Oberst et al., 2014). The students of East Bengal (East Pakistan), now Bangladesh, sparked an extensive movement that advocated for the recognition of Bengali as the official language of Pakistan. Students organized a demonstration on February 21 in 1952, in which they demanded equal status for Bengali. In that time, Section 144 deemed assembly of more than four people in public as a deliberate mutual intent to create a nuisance, a punishable offense often termed as a 'rout' and an unlawful attempt to disturb the peace. When large sections of the procession of the protestors ignored Section 144, police opened fire on the peaceful rally of students and killed a number of them, provoking civil unrest. Following years of conflict, the government of Pakistan in 1956 finally settled for Bengali as one of the official state languages of the country (Al-Helal, 2003; Glassie & Mahmud, 2008).

     The Bengali Students' Role in the War of Independence against Genocide. Starting from the seeds of confrontation sowed during the language movement in 1952, the progressively deteriorating relationship between the East wing and the West wing of Pakistan led to the declaration of independence for Bangladesh on March 26, 1971. The nine month struggle for independence ultimately led to victory on December 16, 1971. The civil defiance started to develop when the sole Bengali leader of East Pakistan was denied power despite winning 167 parliamentary seats out of 169. While talks began between Sheikh Mujib and President Yahya Khan to settle outstanding issues, the Pakistani military junta brought in more troops into East Pakistan, and at the same time wantonly killed innocent civilians everywhere throughout the nation. When talks failed, the genocide started with the Pakistani armed force's crackdown on the general population of East Pakistan at midnight on March 25, 1971.

The students and the nationalist political activists carried out the act of striking back outside the cantonment yet the armed force ultimately moved into the city quickly and began the genocide. Unconstrained uprisings took place following the declaration on March 26, 1971. The general public participated passionately in the uprisings. Numerous freedom fighters migrated to neighboring Indian Territory for asylum and training in war strategies and techniques, including guerrilla fighting and the utilization of arms/explosives, due primarily to the enemy's superiority of trained troopers and modern weapons (Banglapedia, 2015; BBC News of 2011; Dummett, 2011; Jillani, 2011). The war ended on December 16, 1971, with the surrender of the Pakistani Army to the Indian and Bangladeshi forces, making it the largest surrender since World War II (BBC News, 2011; Banglapedia, 2015).

The Democratic Movement of 1990 and Massive Uprisings. Almost two decades after Bangladesh independence and after numerous changes of regimes, a democratic movement demanding the immediate dissolution of the autocratic regime of the then President Hussain Muhammad Ershad surfaced. The breakthrough of the movement was possible through a reported use of nonviolent means of protests against the regime in 1990 (Mustafa, 2004).

In 1982, General Hussein Muhammad Ershad, in a bloodless coup, seized power of the country and became the Chief Martial Law Administrator and banned all the political parties. He assumed his presidency in 1986 as he proclaimed his 'win' in the parliamentary election. The opposition refused to accept the Ershad regime's coming to power and questioned its legitimacy. Ershad refused to step down, and in1987, the opposition parties mobilized mass demonstrations in protest and demanded Ershad's removal from power, calling for Ershad's immediate resignation and demanding a new election under the caretaker government.

Through strikes, street demonstrations, mass public demonstrations, and the 'Seize of Dhaka' programs of the opposition, the party alliances ultimately paralyzed the country's major cities and towns. On Ershad's orders, the police fired on participating protesters, resulting in civilian casualties. People from all walks of life including workers, doctors, lawyers, and intellectuals joined in the opposition. Strikes and public demonstrations continued despite the state of emergency and indefinite curfews of marital law that ultimately led to Ershad's weakening base of support and ultimately his resignation (Global Nonviolent Action Database, n.d.).

2013 Shahbag Protests. The Shahbag movement, which came to life in February, 2013, was called a 'Bengal Spring,' a movement comparable to the 2011 'Arab Spring' in Tahrir Square in Cairo and the media also referred to it as the "Spirit of 1971" (Lippert and Richards, 2013). The movement was triggered by the life sentence verdict of Abdul Quader Molla, who was a war criminal based on actions during the war of 1971. Rather than accepting the sentence as 'justice too long delayed' (Lippert and Richards, 2013, p. 134), tens of thousands of youngsters, including bloggers and activists drummed up by social media, assembled in the capital city of Dhaka's central premises of Shahbag Square and demanded that life imprisonment is too lenient a punishment, considering his crime. They protested that the punishment was not enough and that hanging of the '*razakar*' will be the most appropriate punitive measure. The '*razakar*' are the Bangladeshis who allied themselves with ruling Pakistan in the 1971 war of independence of Bangladesh. "Hang the *razakar*" was the slogan that echoed from the Shahbag Square to elsewhere in Dhaka (Lippert & Richards, 2013; Ahmed, 2013).

A Snapshot of Reflection on the Literature Review. The literature review findings introduced the phenomenon of citizen activism and the newest addition of social media that has

brought about a novel dimension in activism altogether. The literature also provides an idea as to how young people and the marginalized are at the forefront of activism using digital media for a cause and the importance of studying digital activism among this cohort. The literature also focuses on the primary issues addressed by the practices of activism with some activism examples. However, digital activism campaign studies based on Southeast Asia have not yet been addressed per se. A case study may be of prime importance that could reflect and highlight a relatively contemporary phenomenon of digital activism success story based on Southeast Asia and the factors behind the successful campaign.

III. CASE STUDY AS RESEARCH METHOD

A Prelude to the Discussion

This chapter introduces the case study strategy as a research tool. This introduction also orients the reader with the types and definitions of case studies, and how they were developed. What follows is a brief discussion explaining how the available data have been analyzed using the methodological research design approach that is most appropriate for this study. The case study reflects on social justice campaigns on social media and informs knowledge on successful social media/social justice campaigns.

Introduction to Case Study as a Research Tool

People may construct collective identities to challenge social injustice from a ruling authority. This is done via the public expression of language and symbols (Gramson, 1992). This collective identity could be measured via observation and analysis of cultural symbols and identities (Brown, Ray, Summers, and Fraistal, 2017). The contents of social media activism in this regard could be studied through observation where the inferences could be drawn from the data in light of a particular theory or perspective.

A case study approach that includes an in-depth observation of the contemporary social phenomenon of social media activism to influence behavior against social injustice (i.e., the condition of unfair practice prevailing in society) is addressed. This tactic is in line with several other studies that have used social media contents as data (Grant, 2016; Bosch, 2017) and theories are developed inductively using qualitative data from different sources while matching grounded theory and middle-range theory construction. Data were garnered from multiple sources to address the research questions.

Brief Overview of the Case Study Method and How it was Developed.

The case study answers questions such as the "why" and the "how" regarding a phenomenon of interest. A number of previously developed theoretical propositions can help in data collection and analysis to answer the questions (Yin, 2003). Case study research seeks to answer questions such as "why taken,""how executed," and "what was the result" (Schramm, 1971). This systematic inquiry on an event or a set of events explains and describes a particular phenomenon of interest (Bromley, 1990) at a particular time, as a separate entity in a particular place, and within a boundary that is different from other entities (Stake, 1995).

Case study research as an approach is sometimes criticized as not rigorous or objective enough in comparison with other approaches (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg, 1991; Rowley, 2002). Despite the criticisms, case studies are widely used because they offer insights that might not be achieved with other approaches. Case studies are frequently used as tools for the preliminary and exploratory research steps of a project. Sometimes, the case study research project may serve as a basis for the development of a more structured means for surveys and experiments (Rowley, 2002). This is especially appropriate to new research territories for which existing theories seem inappropriate or insufficient, where a fresh perspective is required, or when complementary to incremental theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989). These, however, are a limited application of the case study research. The case study research's suitability in answering the "why" and the "how" questions (Yin, 2003; Rowley, 2002) in a deeper and more detailed investigative manner could be used for three kinds of research—explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory.

Three factors need to be judged first before deciding on a case study research:

- The type of questions that need to be answered

- The extent of the researcher's control over the behavioral events

- The degree of focus on contemporary events as opposed to the historical events

Case study research is good for contemporary events where the pertinent behavior cannot be manipulated. This research method uses many sources of evidence that go beyond the range of sources of evidence available for a historical study (Rowley, 2002).

Contemporary case study analysis is said to have its beginnings in subjective approaches in the disciplines of anthropology, history, psychology, and sociology (Merriam, 1998; Simons, 2009; Stewart, 2014). Authentic cases of contextual analysis stem as far back as the mid-nineteenth century with the account of Charles Darwin (Stewart, 2014). Most ascribe the contextual investigation about the case study approach attempted in humanities and social sciences in the mid-twentieth century when long, thorough ethnographic investigations of people and societies were conducted by utilizing this design (Johansson, 2003, Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stewart, 2014). Sociologists and anthropologists examined individuals' lives, encounters, and how they comprehended the social and cultural setting of their reality, with the aim of grasping understanding into how people translated and ascribed importance and meanings to their experiences that made up their world (Johansson, 2003; Simons, 2009). Such examinations were directed in the natural settings of those experiences with results introduced in narrative descriptions (Merriam, 2009). Early examples of key case studies are Thomas and Znaniecki's (1958 [1918-1920]) investigation of Polish laborers in Europe and America and the ethnographic work by Malinowski (1913) in the Trobriand Islands in Melanesia that spanned quite a few years(Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark and Morales, 2007; Johansson, 2003; Stewart, 2014).

With the advent and dominance of positivism in science, there emerged a philosophical divide between those supporting quantitative approaches of positivism and those that aligned

themselves with more qualitative approaches that embedded the methods of interpretivist and constructivist paradigms. With the forceful development of positivism in science in the late 1950s, quantitative techniques turned into a common concentration for the social sciences. Therefore, studies, tests, and factual techniques tied down in quantitative methodologies were supported and considered to be more thorough than subjective designs (Johansson, 2003). During the 1960s and 1970s, the quantitative studies were dominated by experimental designs. At that time, case studies were utilized, either as a technique within the quantitative studies or as descriptive research on a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). The case study approach was criticized for its inability to support generalizability and for its constrained power of validity as a research design (Johansson, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Stewart, 2014). This setting prompted a philosophical division in investigations about the research methodologies: those supporting positivism and quantitative methodologies and those lined up with subjective strategies implanted in constructivist and interpretivist standards.

The Chicago School of Sociology between the 1920s and the 1950s is often referred to as the forerunner of contemporary case study investigation design (Stewart, 2014). Here, the anthropologists honed their methods on university cultures by leading lengthy case study analyses, including field-based observations of groups with the point of understanding their cultural and social lives (Creswell et al., 2007; Johansson, 2003; Stewart, 2014). Parallel to the utilization of case study analyses in human sciences like anthropology or medicine, the disciplines in the social sciences such as sociology, education, and political science additionally held onto case study as a type of investigation (Anthony & Jack, 2009; Brown, 2008; Creswell et al., 2007; George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2004; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2014).

The emergence of second-generation researchers on case study analysis appeared with the surfacing of the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory, having its origin from the Chicago School of Sociology, merged qualitative techniques of study with quantitative strategies for data analysis (Johansson, 2003). The grounded theory brought about an inductive approach that utilized a detailed systematic methodology to analyze data. This restored enthusiasm for qualitative methodology prompted rejuvenation in the utilization of case study in various disciplines (Anthony & Jack, 2009; George & Bennett, 2005; Johansson, 2003; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). As indicated by Johansson (2003), Robert Yin took followed this strategy, drawing upon his experience of scientific approaches to research, related the experimental logic to a natural inquiry, and blended that with the qualitative techniques. This further bridged the methodological gap and fortified the quality of the case study research. He introduced an organized procedure for undertaking case study research where theoretical propositions guide the research procedure and are examined as a part of the result, featuring his pragmatic way of dealing with a qualitative contextual investigation inquiry. While still subjective and inductive, it was deterministic in nature with an accentuation on cause and effects, testing theories, and a concern of reality (Brown, 2008; Yin, 2014).

Along with all these advancements, in the 1970s, educational research held onto case study research as an approach to assess educational program design and development (Merriam, 2009; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995). Strategies were required that could be utilized to investigate factors, such as participants' points of view and the impact of sociopolitical settings on curriculum successes and failures (Simons, 2009). Advancement of case study investigation in education concentrated on the need to decide on the effect of instructive projects and give relevant evidence of approach and practice choices that bolstered social and instructive change in

the United Kingdom and the United States. The most noteworthy contributors to this field were

Stake (1995, 2006) and Merriam (1998, 2009). Stake (1995), an educational psychologist with

enthusiasm for creating program assessment methods, utilized a constructivist point of reference

to case analysis. This brought about putting more accentuation on the inductive investigation,

revelation, and comprehensive analysis that was portrayed in thick descriptions of the case.

Like Stake (1995, 2006), Merriam (1998, 2009) was not as organized in her approach as

Yin (2014), yet advanced the utilization of a theoretical structure or research inquiries to guide

the case study. The case study approach has evolved in sophistication and is seen as a valid type

of inquiry to investigate an expansive scope of complex issues, especially when human conduct

and social communications are key to understanding topics of interest (Anthony & Jack, 2009;

Flyvbjerg, 2011; George & Bennett, 2005; Luck, Jackson & Usher, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Stake,

2006; Yin, 2014).

The proponents of the case study research method recommend a strong theoretical

framing of the case study, yet in this particular research, the researcher was not going to start

right with an 'a-priori' theoretical framework as a "lens" to guide this research. Instead, the study

was open to a more inductive approach, which began with some research questions and having a

collection of qualitative data. Qualitative research generally is associated with the inductive

approach, while the deductive approach is more common with quantitative research. An

inductive approach is usually focused upon exploring a new phenomenon or taking a fresh

perspective about a previously researched phenomenon. This approach, therefore, necessitates

the researcher to begin with an open mind, with no preconceived notion of what may be found.

The aim of this exploratory research was thus about generating new theory based on the data

(Gabriel, 2013).In social sciences, it is quite common to do exploratory or discovery-oriented

research where the study seeks to gain new insights into the phenomenon of interest, ask queries, and assess the phenomenon in a new light in order to clarify or understand an issue (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2015).

The researcher reviewed the data looking for the repetition of ideas and recurrent concepts that became apparent, tagged them with codes extracted from the set of data, grouped these codes into concepts, and then consolidated them to categories. These categories were the base for the development of new theories. An inductive approach is an approach to theory development from observation and empirical data (Saunders et al., 2015). This approach is unlike the traditional model of research that relies on the researcher to choose an existing theoretical framework, depending on data. This research instead uses an approach of developing a theory that could match up with the notion of grounded theory and middle-range theory. This research, therefore, did not refer to a specific theory but rather used the approach to a method of theory construction. Once the data are analyzed thoroughly, the researcher examined the existing theories to position the new theory within the discipline (Gabriel, 2013). By applying theory-building techniques to empirical research, the study built generic propositions about the real world, which in turn could also be tested via empirical research in future studies.

The Background on Propositions and Questions

In the era of digital activism, there have been success stories as well as cases of disappointment. It is understandable that having the generation of awareness and a great deal of online attention with the ability to reach millions online instantly with hashtag activism could be admirable (as in the case of #IceBucketChallenge, Kony2012, or #MeToo), yet the question remains what may be the role of this new media in making a tangible impact in the real world. It

is also true that activism has changed with the advent of the new media. The question still remains whether today's activists could be contented with mere digital activism alone.

According to research conducted at the University of Washington, a digital citizen activism campaign or movement could become successful if the demands for that particular cause are met, especially when marginalized people opt for nonviolence by combining social media with street-level organization (Kelley, 2013). For a contemporary citizen movement to transpire successfully; there could be other factors that explain why the citizens' demands could become successful and not just activism via social media. There could be sustainable social campaigns, identification of realistic and achievable goals, better focus, organized movement, greater leadership, revolutionary zeal, the motivation of supporters, supportive response from the public, and an overall dedication and commitment to time and resources to the cause, etc. (Brickman, 2017).

Importance of Case Studies in Addressing the RQs.

The themes of some foundational case studies discussed explained how marginalized communities found an avenue to share their collective voices to draw the attention of the authorities concerned, stakeholders, and the mainstream media. In all these situations, an intervention of the higher authorities was necessary. However, marginalized people wanting a desired change in their existing circumstances did not have a platform to raise their petition unless social media became an expressive apparatus for them in voicing their opinion and raising concerns. The hashtag campaigns via social media platforms were instrumental in making a breakthrough in reaching their respective objectives of disseminating awareness.

Case Selection.

This dissertation employed a single case study design and focused on the

#NoVATonEducation movement. The case was selected for two primary reasons: the scale and

impact of the campaign and the availability of multiple types of data. The selection of this

particular case was also due to the fact that it represented a case of successful social media/social

justice campaign that demanded total scrapping of value-added tax on private university

education in Bangladesh. Although this case was not an educational policy dissertation, it is

reflected more on an impactful digital campaign on educational policy in the Southeast Asian

context.

The private university students in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, voiced their demands

by using digital platforms effectively and efficiently, which marked a "new kind of student

movement" in Southeast Asia (Chowdhury, Housna, and Shams, 2016; Sabur, 2015). The scale

of mass student protests signified the power of people when united for a cause. This event kept

the "reporters on the tip of their toes" (Chowdhury et al., 2016), and the students' demands

proposed in the campaign via peaceful protests could ultimately make a breakthrough. The

government agreed to repeal the value-added tax in the face of mass protests (*Star Online

Report*, 2018). It was reported that during 2015, 60% of students in Bangladesh received a

tertiary level of education from private universities, not by choice but by situational and

circumstantial demands of the country. As they could not access the affordable and subsidized

public University education (Sabur, 2015), which was based on merit and had capacity

constraints. Private universities came to cater to this need for higher education (Masud, 2015;

Sabur, 2015). In 2015, the government imposed VAT to expand the purview of revenue

collection (Masud, 2015), and the students felt that this policy relegated them to mere consumers

(Masud, 2015; Sabur, 2015). Claiming that education was not a "product," the students protested against the sudden imposition of 7.5% value-added tax on private university education in the country and demanded a complete scrap of the "imposition." Fearing an additional hike in tuition, thousands of students, mostly from a middle-class background, protested that the move was going to add to the already existing burden on their families in paying for their education. The students vowed to continue the peaceful protests and demonstrations until the demands were met (Hussain, 2015).

Value-added tax is a consumption tax, common in more than 160 countries in the world. This tax is levied in the most economically advanced countries except the United States (Tax Policy Center, n.d.). Ultimately, the consumer bears the burden of VAT (European Commission). All sellers collect VAT in each stage of the supply chain on taxable sales. Suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and end consumers pay the value-added tax on their purchases. End consumers pay sales taxes on their purchases and retailers collect it when the final sale is made to the end consumers for their purchases (Yrjanson, 2015).

The surge of student protests (#NoVATonEducation) was one of the exceptional social media campaigns in Bangladesh (Berlyne and Cant, 2015). Protests from June to September of 2015 focused on the imposition of a 7.5% value-added tax (VAT) on tuition and fees on private universities and medical schools. The protests ultimately led the government of Bangladesh to withdraw VAT. The #NoVATonEducation movement included relentless peaceful protests from students of various private universities in Bangladesh. The student protests offline and stakeholder protests online via different social media platforms ultimately made the government to withdraw its plan.

The researcher identified multiple data sources for exploring the case, including social media posts and mainstream media articles. In addition, she identified potential key informants who were involved in the project, including students, professors, university administrators, student leaders/key influencers (opinion leaders), members of civil society, and media influencers like journalists reporting on social media activism.

This study was a qualitative analysis that sought to gain insights based on public social media posts regarding the "no VAT on education" movement of private university students, key stakeholders, and the general public during June-September of 2015. This case study sheds light on a decision or a set of decisions, why they were taken, how the decision was implemented, and what the results were (Schramm, 1971). The case involved understanding the meanings, contexts, and processes as perceived from different perspectives, to understand individual and shared/collective social meanings.

Selection of Methodological Approach.

Robert K. Yin's conceptualization of case study research reflects an experimental orientation where the ideal of objectivity is maintained. In this approach, meticulous data collection and accurate reporting are some key attributes. This case study research mainly followed Yin's framework of a type 2 case study of single design with multiple embedded units of analysis (social media data, interview data, traditional media data, etc.), which the researcher believed was the best approach to address this study. The rationale for this particular type of case study was on the ground for a revelatory case study (in-depth case study research) that previously had not been done or the phenomenon that had not been accessible to most social scientists (Yin, 2014). In this method of Yin's single case embedded study research design, the

techniques/procedures included data collection and analysis using multi-method qualitative analysis.

This methodological approach for the case study also was underpinned by discovering meanings and understanding contextual experiences. The researcher was interactive and had taken part in the study while interviewing the relevant participants in-depth. The research was based on the production of knowledge, where the researcher also attempted to understand the researcher's interpreted reality as the case unfolded with a simultaneous examination. Here the researcher also was open to discovering meaning and interpreting experiences in the context, which was more appropriate for this research while interviewing the study participants. The philosophy employed was interpretivism, where the researcher explored different interpretations of a phenomenon from the lived experience of the informants.

Framing Up The RQs.

Perspective and Overview. This study examined the use of social media activism, as evidenced in "hashtag campaigns," in the context of the South East Asian country like Bangladesh. In particular, the study focused on ways in which the concerned stakeholders and the emerging adults in the country used a hashtag campaign to promote social justice in this parliamentary republic.

The dissertation used a case study approach to explore the "how," the "why," and the "what" as well as the relationships and the connections among communicators and messages (Salmons, 2012). This study is an empirical inquiry on a relatively contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context. The analysis relied on multiple sources of evidence and triangulated among those sources to identify key contexts and concepts that shaped this case of social media activism, which may provide a basis for future quantitative research (Wyse, 2011).

Research Questions. The following are the research questions for this study.

Overall Research Question:

What were the key elements of the successful #NoVATonEducation social media

campaign?

Specific Research Questions:

RQ1. How did the #NoVATonEducation campaign develop over time?

RQ2.What tools did activists use in communicating about the #NoVATonEducation

campaign?

RQ3. What was the role of social media in this case of successful student activism?

RQ4.What core message strategies were used to mobilize this movement?

RQ5. What other factors influenced the success of the campaign?

Key Influencers and Interview Participants.

A multi-step process was used for identifying influencers and other interview

participants. First, social media influencers (SMIs) were identified through examining social

media posts. Persons who posted frequently and whose messages were often liked and shared

were targeted for interviews. SMIs are those persons who endorse and affect or mold audience

attitudes via their social media posts like blogs, tweets, or other means in social media platforms.

SMIs tend to have established credibility in the eyes of their audience and have the ability to

persuade others via their authenticity and their reach (Gorry & Westbrook, 2009; Pixlee, n.d.).

Students were the primary SMIs for this movement, but because students enrolled during

2015 have already graduated from their respective universities, the researcher also used

university contacts (e.g., former professors) to help locate them. SMIs who were actively

involved in this movement and who remembered the case and were willing to talk about it in

detail were selected for interviews. Also, to prompt the memory of these SMIs, the researcher referred to the publicly shared social media posts and snapshots of the case and asked them to talk about it.

Second, interview data were gathered not only from students who were the prime social media activists on the issue, but also from other stakeholders (i.e., university professors and administrators), key influencers, and opinion leaders (i.e., the country's youth icons/renowned youth leaders). Expert opinions were solicited from people who witnessed this movement taking place. The researcher interviewed university professors (who dealt with the student body while they protested against the VAT imposition during the anti-VAT movement); heads of departments who dealt with the student body as well as university administrators, such as university registrars (who dealt with the educational policy formulation); experts (who were knowledgeable about the University Grants Commission activities and who had closely monitored and observed the students). Many of these influencers and opinion leaders also took part in online and offline activism. Journalists who had experience of news reporting/writing feature articles representing contemporary Bangladeshi social media activism and wrote feature reports, editorials, and posted on social media on this movement were also interviewed. In this study, the interview data were crucial as the insights gained from the interviews were a major source in facilitating the interpretation of the social media data.

Based on an initial analysis of the social media posts and the coverage of the movement in the mainstream media, the researcher targeted the following types of participants for interviews regarding the #NoVATonEducation movement:

- University Administrator/Professor
- Journalist

- Student Social Activist

- Non-Student Social Activist

The interviewer's topics for the respective interview guides have been detailed in the appendices (please refer to Appendix C, D, E, and F). Each set of participants were asked a different set of questions when the interview was conducted. The interviewees were informed about the nature of the interview and the objective of the research.

In selecting the participants (at least three in each category) for the interviews, a non-probability purposive sampling technique using the researcher's judgment was utilized to make up the sample. Case study research allows working with small samples when the researcher wishes to select instances that are particularly informative (Neuman, 2005). These selections were dependent upon the research questions and the research objectives as well as the themes and identities that emerged from the textual data.

Seventeen participants were interviews in total: five students (two of whom were student leaders of the campaign), five university professors (three of whom were in university administration as well), and three non-students (persons who also actively participated in the campaign online and offline), and four journalists (three were columnists and newspaper reporters; one of them was a photojournalist).

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sought and approved for this study, which also dealt with the number of study participants, types of interview guides for each kind of participant, and the informed consent form. The interviews of key informants were conducted face-to-face. The interviews were conducted only after the respondents signed an informed consent form for the interviews. Each interview was about an hour in duration. The data from their interviews were recorded with the participants' permission. The questionnaires

were in English (please refer to the appendices) and the interview participants understood the

meanings of the questions without any problems. As all the interview participants at least had

completed their undergraduate degrees in Bangladesh in English, they answered in English most

of the time. The participants were given the liberty to speak in any language they preferred to

reply in, whether in English or the native language Bengali.

How Available Data Were Analyzed.

This case study triangulated different data/message sources. Triangulation is the

utilization of at least two or more independent sources of information or information collection

techniques within one research study to guarantee that the information disclosed via the

accumulation of data, analysis, and interpretation is valid, credible, and authentic. This technique

is often used in multi-method quantitative/qualitative or mixed-method studies (Saunders et al.,

2016).

Triangulation is based on positivist assumptions, yet for the interpretivists, the "reality" is

multifaceted and socially constructed, and adding the triangulation technique adds to the

richness, depth, breadth, and complexity of the research (Denzin, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln,

2011).

Hashtag activism is an important apparatus for reaching out to people, establishing and

strengthening ties, and mobilizing support (Guo & Saxton, 2014) for today's activism

movements, which demand better opportunities for interactivity and understanding among the

protesters and their audiences (Harlow & Johnson, 2011). The public discourse via publicly

shared social media posts was the primary source of data analyzed for the study. Other data

sources were mainstream media coverage of the protests and interviews with key influencers.

Analysis of any social media study involves large volumes of datasets gained using application programming interfaces (API) that provide a real time link to the pertinent data. This case study invited scrutiny for portrayals of the online cause and thematic underpinning of such social media movement in particular.

The thematic analysis provided a systematic approach that is a flexible yet accessible way of analyzing the large qualitative and often disparate amount of data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders et al., 2015). This approach lets the researcher integrate and analyze related data from different sources. With the approach to analyze the disparate sets of qualitative data, the researcher performed a thematic analysis which entailed coding the data sets, and integrating them from transcripts, notes, and patterns. This process also produced thematic descriptions, developed test explanations/theories on tentative thematic patterns/relations, and led the researcher to draw and verify conclusions.

The thematic analysis was the best approach in this regard as it was systematic yet not overly prescriptive. It was rather flexible yet rigorous. This technique induced theory in a way similar to the grounded theory method but without following a prescribed approach of coding (Saunders et al., 2015). This technique also allowed the researcher to move between inductive and deductive approaches. The thematic analysis warranted the extraction of data from a web browser to identify the areas of significance for which the best available resource had been NVivo.

The Social Studio at the time of conducting this research did not allow any analysis of three-year-old data, and thus, it was not possible to access the data through this resource. The researcher focused on detailed qualitative accounts of the data following the relevant hashtags.

As a part of data source triangulation, coverage of all the pertinent incidents was examined from various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, for example).

Multiple tools like NVivo (QSR International), top mainstream media websites, and the search tool NexisUni were used for identifying and downloading primary texts. Social media posts relevant to the topic following the hashtag #NoVATonEducation were downloaded from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube platforms. The data were then streamlined using the NVivo (QSR International) tool. Major mainstream news dailies that covered the news and feature articles on those particular hashtag activisms were taken into consideration. Social media posts relevant to the topic following the hashtag #NoVATonEducation were downloaded from Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. The YouTube videos that were cross-posted on Facebook and Twitter were also analyzed and streamlined using the NVivo (QSR International) tool. The themes were organized using the NODES function of the software.

The researcher followed the techniques outlined by NVivo (QSR International) to organize the data manually while identifying emerging themes. In this particular technique outlined by NVivo, the researcher analyzed the relevant data using the specific coding method of putting the data into different containers called nodes and labeling them. The nodes were then used to generate categories and themes.

The themes that addressed the research questions were used to represent the answers. The study looked into how the marginalized population in Bangladesh used social media hashtags to create awareness, raise their voices against the ruling authority regarding the sudden imposition of value-added tax on education, demand social privileges, and how they raised their petition and expressed their protest against the ruling authority. Also, how these issues were portrayed in the mainstream media was examined in addition to social media.

Following the hashtag #NoVATonEducation, public Facebook posts from July 6th, 2015, to September 18th, 2015, and Twitter posts from June 30th, 2015, to September 18th, 2015, were analyzed for this social media case study. This study of #NoVATonEducation at a particular time is a cross-sectional study seeking to describe the occurrence of the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2016) or how factors are related to that occurrence.

The study also used data from traditional media reporting on the #NoVATonEducation movement. Mainstream media articles (news/feature articles) were downloaded using the Nexis Uni (current name of former Lexis-Nexis Academic). The Nexis Uni (former LexisNexis Academic) downloads of traditional media posts were analyzed as exemplars to reflect on the issue. The newspaper articles from different newspapers (in English and Bengali) were downloaded with the filter using the keywords "VAT and Education AND Bangladesh," and "#NoVATonEducation."Furthermore, the articles from the online archival database of the country's primary English newspapers (*The Daily Star*, *The Dhaka Tribune*, and BDNews24) were searched using the same keywords.

Public social media and mainstream media posts were analyzed first to identify key topics. Based on those topics, key influencers (opinion leaders) were chosen and approached for an interview by the researcher based on their profession, relative influence (based on their insightful comments on the social/traditional media), and their face value in the country (those who already were established as key influencer/leadership icons by the country's media), as well as on the basis of their expertise on the issue (based on their credentials).

The information collected from the interviews was stored in the researcher's personal computer accessible only to her, which was protected by a password. The data and analysis were stored on Google docs that were accessible anywhere in the world by the researcher. These files

were uploaded to the password-protected Google Drive, which was accessible only by the researcher. The researcher will store the interview data on the Google Drive for three years and will destroy the data after that time.

Qualitative data are more elastic, varied, and socially constructed. Therefore, the researcher needed to understand the subjective and socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon that was studied. The researcher needed to develop a sensitive understanding regarding the data to make the interpretations more meaningful (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 568).

This qualitative research was based on meanings expressed verbally, in writing, and through images posted on social media with the hashtag #NoVATonEducation. Meanings were principally derived from the texts and the illustrations and not numerical expressions. The meanings were derived from the data collection and data analysis in allowing the meanings to be analyzed and clarified. The data collection resulted in non-standardized data that needed to be classified into various categories.

The non-standardized data, like social media posts (visuals and texts), are large in volume and complex in nature. These massive data of static or dynamic contents (large quantity of papers, still images, visual recordings, relating to the phenomenon on the electronic media) that the researcher confronted needed to be explored, analyzed, and synthesized to address the research questions. The data, therefore, were acquired, explored, summarized, coded, categorized, and linked into themes to address the research questions. Then the themes were linked to a conceptual framework. This framework, developed before the commencement of the research, was refined during and after the data were collected.

No a-priori existing theory was used to formulate the research questions and objectives. This was an inductive analytical approach that was incorporated in conducting this research. The

conceptualization of emerging themes served as the means to devise a framework to help organize and give direction to the data analysis.

For this case, research on the #NoVATonEducation movement, the combination of the primary interview data, documents, archives, and observation served as various triangulation sources of evidence. As the most widely used source of collecting information, the semi-structured, open-ended interviews from the key informants were a valuable source of receiving crucial insights regarding the participants' perspectives on the issues.

The interviews from the participants also served for the researcher to see if the participants thought similarly about the campaign. The researcher gained insight from all these interviews and interpreted how the activism campaign #NoVATonEducation became successful.

Additional reports and documents that were accessed and utilized for research in this case study were used to supplement the interviews and social media posts. The interviewees were allowed to refer to the articles that could corroborate the insights and the information received from the interview sessions. Additional reports, articles, and archival records relevant to the case were accessed using a systematic searching approach like Nexis Uni and archives of mostly circulated English dailies.

The researcher, being a Bangladesh native who lived in her home country for more than three decades before coming to the United States, and also because of her experience in communicating both in English and Bengali in the mainstream media, did not have any issues while translating any Bengali answers to English. The researcher transcribed all the answers verbatim and translated to English wherever required. She looked for the themes once she completed transcribing all interviews for each section of respective participants.

Table 1 details the overall and the specific research questions, the data that was required to address each question and the method proposed as a map to analyze each kind of data required for each research question.

Table 1: The Specific RQs, Required Data, and the Mapping of the Usage of Methods

Research Questions (RQs)	Data Required	Methods Proposed
Overall RQ: What were the key elements of the successful #NoVATonEducation social media campaign?	Feedback from the individual in-depth interview data	Thematic analysis of the in-depth Interviews from the different cross-sectional groups
	Data from the Publicly shared social media (SM) posts on #NoVATonEducation	Thematic analysis from the publicly shared SM posts accumulated from NCapture function of NVivo
	Mainstream media (MSM) articles (news, feature articles, editorials, etc.) talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign	Thematic analysis of the MS articles downloaded from the NexisUni and the English MS media news portals
Specific RQ1. How did the #NoVATonEducation campaign develop over time?	Mainstream media (MSM) articles (news, feature articles, editorials, etc.) talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign	Mainstream media (MSM) articles (news, feature articles, editorials, etc.) talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign

Table 1 (Continued)

Research Questions (RQs)	Data Required	Methods Proposed
Specific RQ1. How did the #NoVATonEducation campaign develop over time? (Continued)	Insights in the form of feedback from the individual in-depth interview data	Individual in-depth interviews data from the relevant participants (students/activists/teachers).
Specific RQ2. What tools did activists use in communicating about the #NoVATonEducation campaign?	Insights in the form of feedback from the individual in-depth interview data	Individual in-depth interview data from the relevant participants (student activists/student leaders/ non-student activists/teachers).
	Mainstream media (MSM) articles (news, feature articles, editorials, etc.) talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign	Mainstream media (MSM) articles (news, feature articles, editorials, etc.) talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign
Specific RQ 3. What was the role of social media in this case of successful student activism?	Insights in the form of feedback from the individual in-depth interview data	In-depth interview analysis from the different cross-sectional groups
	Data from the publicly shared social media (SM) posts on #NoVATonEducation	Analysis from the publicly shared SM posts accumulated from NCapture function of NVivo

Table 1 (Continued)

Research Questions (RQs)	Data Required	Methods Proposed
Specific RQ 3. What was the role of social media in this case of successful student activism? (Contd.)	MSM articles (news, feature articles, editorials, etc.) talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign	Thematic analysis of the MS articles downloaded from the NexisUni and the English MS media news portals
Specific RQ 4. What core message strategies were used to mobilize this movement?	Data from the publicly shared social media (SM) Posts on #NoVATonEducation	Message strategy analysis from the social media discourse following the hashtag on #NoVATonEducation. The data garnered from NCapture function of NVivo.
	Mainstream media (MSM) articles talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign	Message strategy analysis of the mainstream media (MSM) articles talking about the #NoVATonEducation SM/hashtag activism campaign
Specific RQ 5. What other factors influenced the success of the campaign?	Individual interview data from the relevant participants for better insights into the phenomenon/understanding of the perspectives of different actors/activists	Individual in-depth interviews data analysis from the relevant participants.
	Social media discourse (Facebook Twitter, YouTube, Blogs) following the hashtag on #NoVATonEducation	Thematic analysis of the social media discourse on #NoVATonEducation. The data garnered from NCapture function of NVivo.

Table 2 details interview references to address each research question in the study.

Table 2: Relevant Appendices, Interview Guides, Interview Questions to Address RQs

Appendix	Interview	RQs	Relevant Interview Questions
C	University Administrator/ Teacher	Overall	3 a, b; 4 a, b; 5 a, b; 6
		RQ 1	4 b; 5 a, b
		RQ 2	2 a, b, c; 3 a, b
		RQ 3	2 a, b, c; 3 a, b; 4 a, b; 5 a, b
		RQ 4	4 a, b; 5 a, b
D	Journalists (News/Media)	Overall	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
		RQ 1	3, 6
		RQ 2	3, 4, 6
		RQ 3	3, 4, 6
		RQ 4	4, 5, 6
E	Student Social Activists (Interview Guide 3 A)	Overall	3, 4 a, b, c; 5 a, b, c; 6, 7
		RQ 1	2, 3, 4 a, b, c
		RQ 2	5 a, b, c
		RQ 3	3, 4 a, b, c; 5 a, b, c; 6, 7
		RQ 4	4 a, b, c; 5 a, b, c
E	Student Leaders (Interview Guide 3 B)	Overall	1, 2, 7, 8, 11
		RQ 1	3, 4, 5, 6, 11
		RQ 2	4, 7, 8, 10, 11
		RQ 3	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11
		RQ 4	5, 6, 9, 11
F	Non-student Social Activists	Overall	2 a, b, c; 3, a, b; 4, 5
		RQ 1	3, a, b; 4, 5
		RQ 2	2 a, b, c
		RQ 3	2 a, b, c; 3, a, b; 4, 5
		RQ 4	2 c; 3 a, b; 4, 5
A, B, C, D, E, F	All Groups	RQ 5	Social Media (SM) Posts, Mainstream Media (MSM) Posts

IV. FINDINGS

This chapter contains the findings based on mainstream media reporting, interviews, and the social media content.

The face-to-face interview feedback from participants, including journalists, revealed that only a few English newspapers like *The Daily Star*, *Dhaka Tribune*, the online news portal *BDNews24*, and a Bengali newspaper *Prothom Alo* published reports on the #NoVATonEducation movement. These media services followed online and offline activism regarding the movement, where social media activism became the precursor and the prime facilitator in increasing awareness. Media content was reviewed to provide background and context for the other primary data sources (interviews and social media content)

The figure titled as '#NoVATonEducation Timeline in a Nutshell'(Figure 1) was sourced and adapted from a news service, now online portal BDNews24.This figure shows the timeline of this movement, which gives an impression of the movement happenings and connected events. On June 4, 2015, the NBR (The National Board of Revenue) of Bangladesh had levied VAT on private colleges, medical schools, and engineering colleges. The students of these institutions challenged the directive from that point forward. On September 09, 2015, police and students clashed during East-West University student protests in front of the East-West University premises. After the clash of September 09, the agitated students of other private universities also revolted by blocking key streets, which blocked traffic and brought the entire capital city of Dhaka to its knees on September 10.Online (social media activism) as well as rigorous offline activism resulted in the government ultimately accepting demands and removing the VAT (value added taxes) on private university education by September 15, 2015.

The #NoVATonEducation Movement Highlights in a Nutshell

1 Finance Minister of Bangladesh AMA Muhith in the 2015-2016 fiscal year budget for the country proposed 10% VAT on English medium schools, private universities, medical and engineering colleges; later he slashed it by 2.5% when the budget was passed.
Jun 04, '15

Sep 9-10, '15
2 Amid sustained protests, East-West University students blocked streets of Rampura; Clashed with police on Sep 9. On Sep 10, thousands of private university students hit the streets demanding the scrapping of VAT.

3 To placate the situation, the NBR clarified that the universities, not the students, would pay the VAT which was already included in the tuitions fees and the students should not be separately charged. Nonetheless, the clarification remained futile in convincing the students, who decided to carry on with the demonstration.
Sep 10-11, '15

Sep 10-11, '15
4 Many questioned the logic of VAT imposition on education, as they termed education as their basic rights. Although several universities agreed to pay the VAT, the students feared the universities would eventually raise tuition fees to recover the sum.

5 Traffic on Dhaka streets came to a grinding halt, as students hit the streets. With the city life crippled, Muhith hinted at a roll-back.
Sep 10-13, '15

Sep 10-14, '15
6 The Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), a student organization affiliate of the ruling Awami League also insisted on the VAT withdrawal.

7 The students continued to agitate blocking streets at Rampura, Badda, Gulshan, Uttara, Banani, and Dhanmondi.
Sep 12-14, '15

Sep 14-15, '15
8 Media reports around noon declared a Cabinet meeting's decision to withdraw the tax, resulting in celebrations among the protesters who returned to their respective campuses. The official announcement came around an hour later.

Source: https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/14/government-withdraws-7.5-percent-vat-on-private-university-tuition-fees

Figure 1: #NoVATonEducation Timeline in a Nutshell
(Adapted from BDNews24 Post)

Timeline and Topics from Mainstream Media

Levying of Value Added Tax Announced

The mainstream media on June 4, 2015, reported the Bangladesh government looking into the possibilities of levying of value-added tax (VAT) on private universities as well as medical and engineering colleges (BDNews24.com, 2015). The then Finance Minister A.M.A. Muhith in his budget speech indicated that, although VAT was levied on the English medium schools in the country, private universities, private medical colleges, and private engineering colleges were beyond the scope of this VAT. Therefore, he proposed a VAT at 10 percent for the private universities, private medical colleges, and private engineering colleges to be collected in order to keep *"the tax burden at a rational level"* (BDNews24.com, 2015; Liton & Habib, 2015).

High Court Ruling over VAT

By August 09, 2015, the high court of Bangladesh issued a rule soliciting an explanation as to why the decision to impose a 7.5% value-added tax on private universities, medical, and engineering colleges should not be considered illegal. Earlier in June of 2015, in a budget speech, the Finance Minister proposed a 10% VAT, and upon the Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's request in her budgetary discussion speech in the parliament, the VAT was reduced to a truncated rate of 7.5% by July 2015 (BDNews24, 2015; Wadud, 2015). Upon hearing a plea from a teacher and two students of the Daffodil University of Dhaka, a bench of two justices issued a ruling. This ruling was on the secretaries of the finance and education ministries of Bangladesh, the chairman of the University Grants Commission of the country, and the country's National Board of Revenue (NBR), asking to explain why this decision of VAT on private university education was not illegal within three weeks. After the hearing, a law faculty member of the Daffodil University, who filed a petition along with two of his students, opined

that the policy of VAT imposition was discriminatory and it was the state's responsibility to assure education for all. There cannot be separate rules for the public and the private universities concerned in the country (BDNews24, 2015).

Ruling out the Withdrawal of VAT

During August of 2015, Finance Minister Muhith ruled out the rollback of value-added tax on private university education. A mainstream media report informed about his announcement. The Finance Minister announced that the imposed value-added tax of 7.5% was neither going to be withdrawn nor lessened. He also said that the students' agitation in this regard would not have any impact regardless of the intensity of agitations. The budget was approved for the FI 2015-2016, and the NBR issued an order regarding this tariff. The students of private universities started to protest against this decision. A teacher and two students of Daffodil University filed a petition on August 4, 2015, and the High Court issued a ruling about this on August 09, 2015 (Banglanews24.com, 2015; BDNews24, 2015; The Daily Star, 2015). The petition was raised even before the entire student body started protesting in full swing.

Speaking about his opinion on the students' distress on the proposed tariff, Muhith expressed that he never supported student movement against the proposed VAT. Addressing the journalists present at a meeting in Sylhet, the Finance Minister exclaimed, "Since they can pay fees of Tk. 30,000 to Tk. 50,000 per month, why can't they pay only 7.5% VAT?"(BDNews24, 2015, The Daily Star, 2015). He also expressed that there were no grounds for the movement. On August 13, 2015, the chairmen of trustee boards and vice-chancellors of private universities urged the Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid to scrap the VAT imposition. The Minister assured that he would discuss this issue with the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister (BDNews24, 2015).

Students and Police Clash in September, 2015

On September 9, 2015, clashes took place between the police and the students while the East-West University students were blocking the Pragati Sarani at Aftabnagar and demanding the withdrawal of VAT on private university tuition. The police opened fire and at least 20 people were injured. Although law enforcement refuted the claim, students alleged that the police attacked them with batons, rubber bullets, and buckshot. The Proctor of the East-West University told the press that at least six persons of the university, including the Additional Registrar, were shot and at least twenty students sustained various kinds of injuries. Some of them were rushed to the nearby Farazy Hospital at Banasree, and a student with several bullet wounds was later transferred to the United Hospital at Gulshan (BDNews24, 2015).

Once the skirmish was over, the students scattered yet several hundred returned in the evening to the lively streets again and stared with their demonstration by blocking those thoroughfares for five and a half hours until 9:30 pm. The student activists obliged the request by the police considering the public distress arising from this inconvenience (BDNews24, 2015). According to the activists, their peaceful protests were about demanding scrapping the tax imposition on education that was met with sudden swooping of the police and having several policemen including the police constables from the Badda police station firing on them. On the other hand, according to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Gulshan Division's Deputy Commissioner, no shooting had taken place, yet the students received baton-charging as he framed that the students had taken position in the streets that was causing hindrance to the thoroughfares of traffic. According to him, this blocking was crippling the city streets and the students had to be moved elsewhere. According to the Badda police OC (Officer in Charge of the police station); twelve policemen were injured as the students hurled brickbats at them. The OC,

however, said that the police force fired some rubber bullet shots 'in the air. 'After this incident, the EWU (East-West University) Proctor informed the press that the University had to remain closed on the following day, i.e., September 10, 2015 (BDNews24, 2015; BD BDNews24, 2015).

The police baton charging on the students of East-West University freed the busiest roads of Mirpur Road at Dhanmondi's Sukrabad from the sit-in demonstrations on September 10, 2015, but traffic in the city did not attain normalcy. Vehicles began moving again the once the police dispersed protesters from the Rampura Bridge, Jamuna Future Park, Gulshan-Mohakhali Road, and Shahjadpur (BDNews24.com, 2015; BDNews24, 2015).

DU Website Hacked

On September 10, 2015, hackers calling themselves "Cyber 71" set up a notification on the site of Dhaka University (DU), which had a history of driving the country's social movements in 1952 and 1969. Cyber 71 hacked the DU website over the university's apparent "silence" since the VAT imposition announcement on the education sector.

Once the site was hacked, the state-funded university's website administrator told BDNews24 that they were attempting to restore the website. Citing the clashes on September 9, the hacker termed the police as "savages" and questioned the "attack on students."The notification ended with the "No Vat on Education" hashtag, the motto of private university students challenging the tax assessment (The Daily Star, 2015).

Roads Blocked by Student Demonstrations

Continuing their protests, the students took to the streets in Dhaka on September 10, 2015, in the different parts of the capital demanding the withdrawal of the VAT and protesting against the attack on demonstrators at Rampura. This resulted in the traffic in Uttara, Pragati

Sarani, Rampura, Mohakhali Wireless Gate, Gulshan, Dhanmondi 27, and Ashulia coming to a

halt (BDNews24.com, 2015). The students clashed with the police in the same spot on

September 9, but on September 10, no incident happened. In the meantime, the students of

BRAC University demonstrated in the Gulshan area. Police were deployed there, and the OC of

Banani police reported that the students protested peacefully. The traffic, however, got stalled on

the streets between Mohakhali and Gulshan intersection. The NSU students gathered at the

Bashundhara Residential area where they had their University campus, yet they did not block the

roads there. The students of Stamford in Dhanmondi blocked parts of Road 27, and the

Dhanmondi police OC requested the students to leave the streets and let the general people suffer

a little less (BDNews24.com, 2015).

Explanation of Student Taxation

On September 10, 2015, the Finance Minister opined that the universities would have to

pay the value-added taxes without increasing the current tuition fees and it was the universities

and not the students who would have to pay taxes (The Daily Star, 2015; The Daily Star, 2015).

The NBR press release briefed that the VAT imposed was not to be pulled from the students in

any way as the VAT already remained included in the existing tuition fees (Abdullah, 2015; The

Daily Star, September 10, 2015; The Daily Star, September 11, 2015). Therefore, the VAT

responsibility was solely on the University authorities and never on the students (The Daily Star,

September 11, 2015). This clarification by the NBR did not satisfy some of the protesting

students. The Prime Minister expressed that, in no other countries, students bear such reasonable

costs for their education (BDNews24.com, 2015).

The mainstream media published a report on September 11, 2015, that the Bangladesh

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced that the students of private universities would remain

untaxed as it was the private universities' authorities who already had agreed that they will be paying the VAT and not the students shall have to pay it (BDNews24.com, 2015). The announcement came after a daylong blockade of major streets in the capital by private university students against the value-added taxes on their tuition fees. At the time of this movement, there were as many as 83 private universities in the country with the approval from the Bangladesh University Grants Commission (UGC). The "clarifications" that the Finance Minister and the NBR made via a press briefing and a press release respectively did not explain why the government had to create a new announcement of the VAT inclusion if it had already existed in the tuition fees (The Daily Star, 2015).

The Government Urged to Review the VAT

The Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB), on September 11, 2015, asked the government to reevaluate its decision to apply VAT to private university education. The Association Chief argued that the board of trustees runs the private universities, and therefore the VAT is not pertinent or relevant. He also urged the students to stop demonstrations. The APUB president announced the Association would be seeking the country's Prime Minister and the Finance Minister's help in resolving the issue if the uncertainty would not get settled (The Daily Star, 2015).

Students Threaten More Protests

Amid the government's "clarification" of the VAT issue and upon rejecting the clarification by the government body, the students of several private universities threatened the government with a tougher stance should the government decline to rescind the imposition of 7.5% value-added tax, including non-stop sit-ins. The launching of police attacks on students irked the agitators and they demanded punishment for the attackers. On September 11, 2015, the

students of Stamford University in Dhaka announced a three-day general strike in all private

universities across the country from September 12, 2015. The students also called upon the UGC

to immediately come up with a suitable time for a student-friendly policy on tuition fees to end

the existing crisis (The Daily Star, 2015).

Students Remain in the Streets

The news media reported that, although many students felt relieved after the NBR

assurance that it was the private universities and not the students will have to pay the taxes and

that they will be calling off the demonstrations, many remained unconvinced that there would be

"no scope for any price hike" in their tuition fees. The spokesperson of the "No VAT on

Education" campaign rejected the NBR clarification outright. When talking to the reporters of

the BDNews24, he declined to consider the mindset of treating education as a commodity when

he said, "We are demanding the withdrawal of VAT on education. So, it's not important who is

paying it. There cannot be any VAT on learning."(BDNews 24.com, 2015).

The student group demonstrators were divided in their opinion about lifting the blockade.

The student rival groups brawled following an altercation regarding this issue while the police

were the silent spectators of the scene only. During the times of squabble, the rival groups kept

on occupying the streets and chasing each other away.

It was after the NBR clarification that BRAC University declared that it would pay the

VAT and would refund the students who had already paid the tariff. Upon hearing this, the

activists lifted the blockade on the streets of Gulshan-Mohakhali. The East-West University

students also behaved in a similar fashion in clearing the street at Badda upon their University

Registrar's assurance. North-South University students also left the streets upon their university

authorities assuring them of no further education cost increase. Nonetheless, some students still

decided to continue with their protests. The left-leaning Bangladesh Chhatra Federation called a strike at all the private universities on September 13, 2015, to press their demand for the withdrawal of VAT on tertiary education (BDNews24.com, 2015). This news was flashed in the mainstream media on September 10 regarding the upcoming strike by the Chhatra Federation on September 13. This federation was a separate entity and did not fully represent the entire student body or the student activists as a whole.

Protesting Students call Three-day Strike

The student activists (separately from the Chhatra Federation) announced a three-day strike in all private institutions across the country, starting from September 12, 2015, until the end of September 14, 2015. The students accused the government's move of tax collection from the private university students, dubbing it as "shrewd move."Jotirmoy Chakrabarty, the coordinator of the student activists' platform on #NoVATonEducation, stated in a press briefing conference on September 11, 2015, in the Stamford University's Dhanmondi campus that they would be going on a strike to demand an immediate scrapping of value-added tax on tuition expenses. As the spokesperson, he also informed that the students' platform demanded the government formulate a policy for fixing the private university tuition fees through the UGC.

Jotirmoy also expressed, "The explanation from the government and NBR is very shrewd. Education is a basic right. We want no VAT imposed on it."Around the same time, despite having a clarification coming from the NBR that VAT will not be discretely realized from the students, and the Finance Minister's reiterating the assertion saying that the universities will have to pay the money as they charged the students lofty expenses for their education yet they will not be able to hike any further fees, and the reassurance from the country's Prime Minister, too, in the Parliament later restating the same did not succeed in satisfying the students

fearing that the university authorities will be realizing the VAT from them by rising their various service charges and future tuition fees (BDNews24.com, 2015).

Traffic in the Streets of Dhaka

On September 13, 2015, a daylong traffic gridlock occurred as a consequence of thousands of students' demands to press the government to lift the value-added tax imposed on their tuition expenses. Agitating students gathered in the key points of the city's Rampura, Mohakhali, Baridhara, Dhanmondi, and other areas around from 10 AM onwards which resulted in extreme congestion of traffic. The city dwellers got stranded for hours together on the roads, as vehicles sat bumper-to-bumper. The commuters (including ambulances, hajj pilgrims on the way to the airport, school-going children) on those roads traveling to their respective destinations in the sweltering heat suffered an ordeal for hours. Some commuters fell ill due to the scorching heat inside the vehicles while sitting in the long queue formed from the traffic congestion as a consequence of road blockages staged by the demonstrating student activists. Many of the commuters had to travel by walking (The Daily Star, 2015).

The Finance Minister's Softer Stance

While speaking to the reporters present at the Bangladesh Secretariat on September 13, 2015, the Finance Minister Muhith discussed the possibility of a softer stance from the government in reviewing the VAT decision. He also said that, in years prior, the government took many initiatives and were altered through reviews. However, on September 12, he expressed that the VAT would not be withdrawn and that the government explored many avenues in seeking the possibilities of greater expansion of the scope of revenue collection. Meanwhile, the students pursued mass protests in the capital nonetheless (The Daily Star, 2015).

Protesting Students give Flowers to Police

Students protesting for VAT withdrawal on their tuition fees, while carrying their activism offline on the streets of Dhaka (Aftabnagar in Rampura) on September 13, 2015, passed another day peacefully while some students tried to show a friendly gesture to the police. The students of East-West University at Aftabnagar gave flowers to the police and took selfies with them. They shared those pictures with flowers with law enforcement on Facebook and on the university page. These photos went viral as many re-shared these rare moments in the history of Bangladesh over their social media (Facebook) timelines. These served as testament to the case of a peaceful and friendly demonstration, which is a rare example in this country's history (The Daily Star, 2015).

Protesters Lift Road Blockade

The students lifted their road blockades as they called off their demonstrations in the capital city on September 13, 2015, while vowing to come back on September 14 if their demands were not met. The students started to temporarily withdraw from the road blockades from various parts of the city of Dhaka around 5 PM, with a promise to resume their protests the next day.

According to the Assistant Deputy Police Commissioner of Ramna Division of Dhaka at that time, the students lifted the blockade around 5:30 PM. According to a student of EWU, while seeking anonymity, the students withdrew out of consideration for the public and indicated that the demonstrations were supposed to be continued until the demands were met. Quoting the post of East-West University Campus page of 05:15 PM, the mainstream media news indicated that the blockade was withdrawn with an ultimatum to the government to fulfill their demands by

that night; if the demands were not met by the next day, the movement was supposed to resume (The Daily Star, 2015).

Roads Blocked Again

After a brief hiatus, the students reoccupied the streets of Dhaka (Rampura, Gulshan, Banani, and Uttara) on September 14, 2015.The September 13 protests choked major thoroughfares of the city and heavily disrupted free flow of traffic in the capital, causing untold misery to commuters. In continuation of their protests, the students again blocked the key streets of capital Dhaka.

According to the Badda Police Station Officer-in-Charge, in protesting while occupying the Rampura bridge around 10:30 am. Around the same time, quite a large number of students from Asian, Shanto Mariuym, BGMEA, and Uttara University occupied the House Building area in Uttara. The sources in the Dhanmondi area said the students gathered to occupy Satmasjid Road and Dhanmondi 27 before the clock struck 12:00 PM. All these blockades in the major veins in the capital made commuting in Dhaka city quite cumbersome during that day, which was the first day of the week; nonetheless, these students promised to continue until their demands were taken care of (The Daily Star, 2015).

The city traffic choked with the East-West University students coming out of their campus blocking the streets between the Rampura Bridge and Merul Badda, BRAC University students' blocking between Mohakhali and Gulshan 1 intersections while taking out a procession from their campus. Also, with the student demonstrations blocking the streets of critically important Airport Road at Kakoli intersection of Banani and the students demonstrating at the House Building intersection at Uttara, traffic was disrupted from the capital city to the highways that led to Tangail and Gazipur. (BDNews24.com, 2015; The Daily Star, 2015).

Class Suspension and University Closure

During the intense student protests, the well-known private universities of Dhaka suspended classes, and one university declared a religious holiday. One of these universities declared closure on a particular day due to "unavoidable circumstances."BRAC University closed on September 14, 2015. Independent University announced Eid vacation from September 13, 2015, to September 26, 2015.

Figure 2: The NSU notice on social media

Meanwhile, North-South University suspended classes, stating that, due to unavoidable circumstances, the classes and the exams of NSU will be suspended until September 15, 2015 (The Daily Star, September 13, 2015).

Lobbying Behind the VAT Withdrawal

The Bangladeshi Prime Minister, after discussion with the Public Administration Minister, decided to withdraw the VAT proposition. Later on, her student party leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) met with her and requested to rescind the VAT decision and expressed their appreciation for the withdrawal decision. The PM also talked to Finance Minister Muhith after the weekly cabinet meeting and discussed the issue. (Insert name of person here)

conveyed her decision of the VAT removal to the Chief of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

The Government's Withdrawal of 7.5% VAT

After several days of unyielding protests on private university tuition and amidst some public suffering from the university students' blocking the Dhaka streets and elsewhere, the government of Bangladesh ultimately rolled back the directive of 7.5% value-added tariffs on private university education. The Finance Ministry of Bangladesh declared that, due to the students' keeping the streets blocked for several days at a stretch and thereby causing mass sufferings and civil disruptions. The statement also said that the government had no intentions of creating student unrest, disrupting civic life, and causing any hurdles in the path of those seeking education. The protesters, however, saw this roll-back as their "victory" in the cause of their "just demand." With the decision of VAT withdrawal, the government also hoped that the students would return to their classes by calling off the agitation (BDNews24.com, 2015; The Daily Star, 2015).

Students Cheer at VAT Withdrawal

Students protesting on the streets of Dhaka, who vowed to continue the movement against VAT on private university tuition, started celebrating once the media reports indicated the government's decision to roll back VAT. They claimed that the government had to "climb down" after their (students') commotion regarding the VAT issue. Once the news spread around 12 PM that the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, during a regular cabinet meeting, recommended the VAT withdrawal, the demonstrating students at the city's *Rampura*, *Uttara*, and *Gulshan* removed the street blockade and returned to their respective campuses in a jovial mood.

Private universities are often connoted as the "farm chicken" (*Farm'erMurgi* in Bengali) in the country, who are often quoted as the "spoon-fed pupils," who are taught in an overly simplified way that discourages independent thoughts. These so-called "farm chickens" refuted the stereotypical belief by claiming that they had "proven" that the "students of private universities could also deliver."They also exclaimed that their movement proved that VAT on education was "unacceptable." Their demonstration platform by the name of Bangladesh Private University Students' Welfare Foundation thanked Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her action which had resolved the confusion that surfaced once the VAT was passed on private university education (BDNews24.com, September 14, 2015).

NBR's Explanation as to Why VAT was Withdrawn

On September 15, the mainstream media published a report on the NBR's explanation after the 7.5% VAT on private university tuition was withdrawn. The NBR made it clear that the tariff had been withdrawn to "cap education costs."The special order signed by the NBR Chief said that the students were already burdened with the extra expenses related to studying at private universities, medical, and engineering colleges and that their expenses would have further increased if the tariff was levied. He also added that the VAT withdrawal would be applied retroactively from June 4, 2015. The NBR Chief also added that the government's decision to scrap the VAT altogether was due to the consideration of political and economic requirements (BDNews24.com, 2015).

The sources who were present in the Cabinet meeting on September 14, 2015, told the online portal BDNews24.com that the Prime Minister summoned the NBR Chief to withdraw the value-added tax directive. This news set off celebrations from the students who had been protesting in Dhaka and Chittagong who later announced their end of agitation and their intent to

return to respective campuses. The formal announcement from the Finance ministry followed

that and the NBR Chairperson in the afternoon held a press briefing to confirm the decision of

VAT withdrawal (BDNews24, September 15, 2015).

Internal Criticism of the Outcome of the VAT Issue

The Bangladesh Prime Minister expressed her discontent over the entire confusion and

misunderstandings that the then Finance Minister and the NBR officials created about the VAT

issue. Several of the ruling party AL leaders also expressed their dissatisfaction over the

confusion that the Finance Minister created by giving "contradictory statements."Seeking

anonymity, one of them opined that the Minister made "things complicated" and that it was "not

expected from a senior leader" like the Finance Minister (Bhattacharjee, 2015). The ruling party

AL's Joint General Secretary termed this fiasco as "unnecessary" in inviting hassle as the

government could procure only Taka 60 crore (crore means ten million) from VAT, whereas the

cost of getting this amount would be 6,000 crores. Therefore, he termed it a "baseless

rationale."He also had claimed that some sectors had "vested interests" in "instigating student

protests." (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

Social Media Posts on #NoVATonEducation

Based on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube Posts.

Introduction to Citizen Activism via Digital Media

A social media campaign is a coordinated effort online via social media platforms to

reach a goal for a desired change. The campaigns relating to social media advocacy involve the

activists reinforcing and assisting each other through regular interactions on social media to

fulfill a desired goal with the spirit of ideas, cooperation, support, trust, and information on

public issues. The #NoVATonEducation campaign, administered by social media activists

throughout the entire Bangladesh, especially by the students of the capital city of Dhaka, rose

against the government's directive of 7.5% value-added tax (VAT) on private university

education. In this campaign, the activists were fully in force offline and online. Following are the

themes based on the publicly shared posts that the activists from different quarters posted online

on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube), following the hashtag #NoVATonEducation.

Although the posts featured in this write-up are from the publicly shared content, the researcher

has deleted the account names, except the names of the verified pages, to ensure privacy of the

individual activists.

In addition to speaking favorably of the #NoVAT campaign mostly on Facebook, some

of the activists also posted on YouTube and Twitter. Photos of student strikes and offline

activism became more evident on Twitter, which was more like a news bulletin for the activists,

from where they interacted in real-time to keep abreast with the news or announcements for calls

for action (CFA). The posts that could have been captured following the #NoVATonEducation

hashtag mostly were from September 13, 2015, onwards during the final stage of the campaign

during September 14-15, 2015, once the campaign got its breakthrough. The students, while

protesting offline, shared the real-time pictures and footages on social media, mainly on

Facebook. The students shared various snapshots and real-time videos of their meetings, road

blockades, rallies, and speeches while demonstrating via YouTube videos, too. The activists

posted social media content both in English and their native language in Bengali. The researcher

translated the students' and other activists' social media content written in Bengali regarding

their demands, frustrations, slogans, and status updates into English.

Police Attacks on Students/Police Action

On September 9, 2015, many students and activists of #NoVATonEducation posted and

re-posted the pictures of police attacks on students in the East-West University premises. The

police fired rubber bullets and buckshot at the students' rallies there and about 30 people got injured during these attacks. The picture (Figure 3) posted on Facebook clearly shows the uniformed police aiming at the students on the scene. A student also posted a photo of an injured victim while he was receiving first-aid. Many also used their Facebook pages to feature this story. One such posts in a Facebook page read, "#Bangladesh Cops fire on student. 15 hurt. #NoVATonEducation."

A similar picture of the police in action (aiming their buck shotguns at the students) was also featured in few of the mainstream media outlets where the caption read as, "Police raided East-West University students protesting against the withdrawal of VAT imposed on a private university. At least 30 people were injured including one of the teachers. Photo: Prothom-Alo." This was also shared by the activists on social media.

Figure 3: Police Attacks on the Activists and an Injured Student's Real-Time Pictures
(Source: Facebook)

Students' Call for Action (CFA)

The students used social media to ask for other activists' participation in the

#NoVatOnEducation movement. On September 10, 2015, one student activist tweeted,

"Join the Revolution...Save the Education!!

#NoVatOnEducation #Shame on You #BanGovt"

Another activist tweeted to #SaveBangladesh from the government's "fascism" by

joining the movement. Others called on the student body for a united campaign to battle the

imposition of the value-added taxes on their education.

The online posters (Figure 4) were calls for action (CFA) to influence the students to

strike while the iron was hot, lest they not get a second chance later. This mainly was to coax the

student body to act on the opportunities promptly while they existed. The activists termed this

VAT directive from the government as "unjust" and called a strike on September 10, 2015,

demanding an act of protest following the police attacks on the students and faculty members.
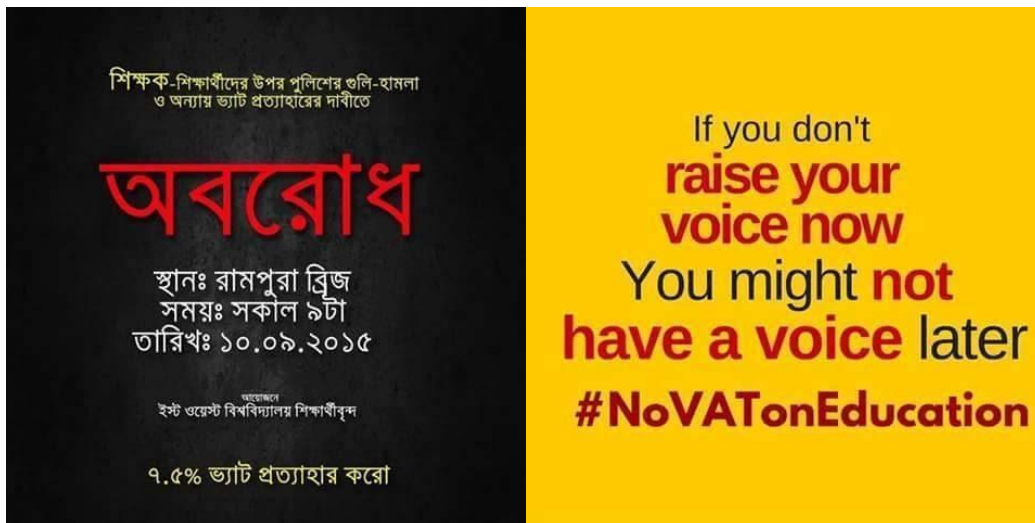
Figure 4: Students' Call for Action in the Protests
(Source: Facebook)

The strike was also called with the demand meant for calling off the government directive of levying value-added taxes on private university education expenses. Regarding the activism campaign, the activists tweeted with the caption, "Students strike demanding withdrawal of #VAT on #TuitionFees #NoVatOnEducation" placing this caption underneath the photo post of the posters during the strike.

Emergency Blood Availability

In a Facebook post, a volunteer organization assured of their accessibility for any help around the clock if anyone of the activists got injured from police attacks during the campaign, in case if there was any bloodshed or emergencies where blood donation was essential.

#NoVATonEducation Emblem

During the movement, a logo was conceived that was geared toward an integrated communication campaign using the same logo on social media platforms, using the emblem of 'No VAT on Education' and other communication elements composed solely in red and black having a yellow canary background. The activists changed their Facebook pages, profile pictures, and profile covers using the same emblem. However, no explanations could be found, particularly on social media, explaining the meanings behind choosing those colors for the campaign. (The choice of the color for the logo was later revealed via the personal interview from the student leaders.)

The Frustrations Expressed

In this social movement, the students framed education as their "basic right" and not a commodity. The Bangladesh government's initial rigid stance made the private university students and their parents/guardians quite concerned regarding the extra burden of value-added

taxes on their shoulders, as they originally thought that they would pay the tax instead of the universities.
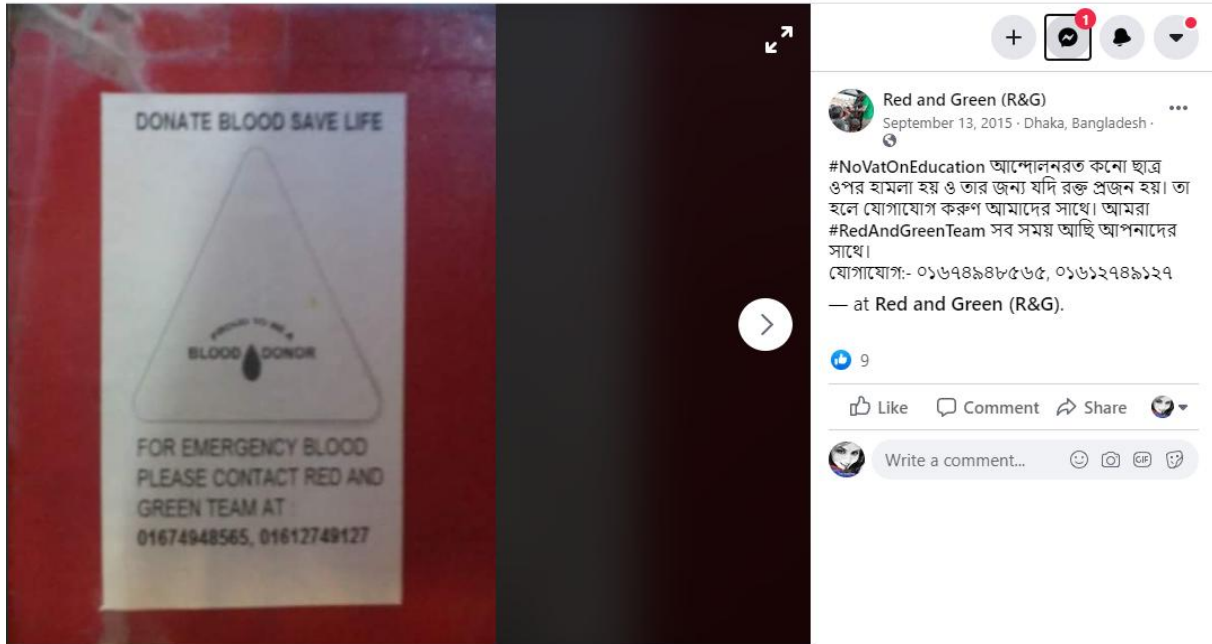
Figure 5: Urgent Blood Donation from 'Red & Green'
(Source: Facebook)

Figure 6:'No VAT on Education' Emblem for the Campaign
(Source: Facebook)

The students argued on the premise that, to address the unfilled demand for higher educational facilities in the country, the government should provide enough initiatives to ensure the demands were met rather than taxing the growth of the private universities. They further argued that the right to education was the basic right for any aspiring citizens of the country.

The slogan "Education is an asset; not any commodity!" was written on posters, floor stickers, and placards. In addition to posting mainly on Facebook, many activists also used Twitter to voice their concerns by attesting to the same idea by saying, "Education is not a commodity; it's a basic human right. #novatoneducation."A number of activists also cross-posted this content. Interestingly, the Bangladesh Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith's name "Maal" meant "commodity/product."The activists, therefore, connoted the expression "Maal" in their slogans—"Shikkha kono Maal noy," meaning "Education is not a commodity!" Satires on a Facebook post called the "earki" went viral, where Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith was shown with a firearm shaped in the letters "VAT."One of the satires with a stint of humor written by famous poet Romen Rayhan featuring the well-known cartoonist Mehedi Haq was widely shared. One of these satires fictitiously quoted the Finance Minister, "For me everything is without any VAT! You name it, I got it… including my sleek limousine, wasted kids! So, you wanna be Ministers, eh? Quit pursuing your education then!" Another theme was based on a mockery of the Minister framing that he proposed to market education as a "commodity."The message in the poem was about the irony, ridicule, hyperbole, and mockery, all done to expose the apparent carelessness in the Finance Minister's part in making some comments on the VAT issue regarding students' demographics, backgrounds, and the teachers' mindsets. These became sensitive issues and hurt the sentiments of the students and teachers concerned. The satire indicated the "Maal" connotation, too with the VAT scenario in a comical manner.

Figure 7: "Education is Not a Commodity"
(Source: Facebook)
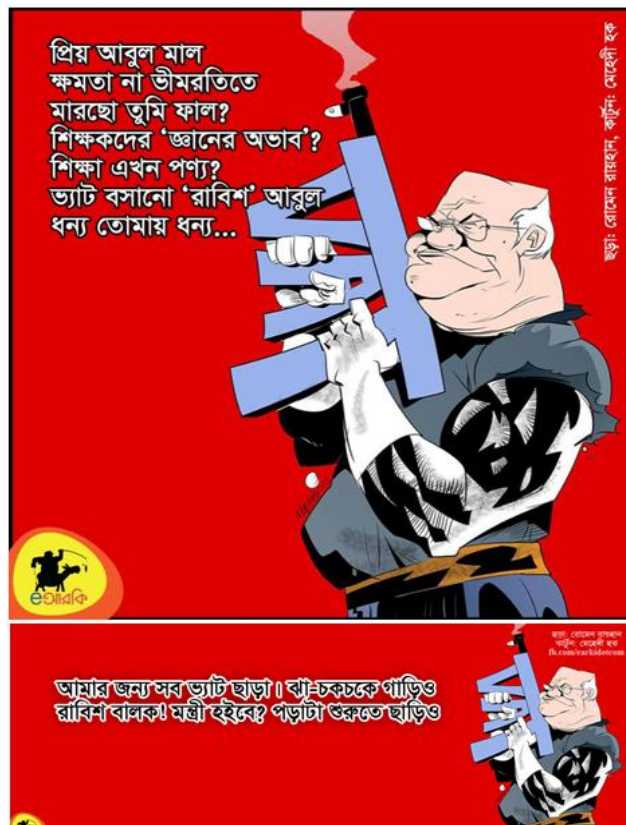
Figure 8: E-Satire on the Finance Minister
(Source: Facebook)

Like those on Facebook, the participants who posted on Twitter also framed "education" as one of their "fundamental rights." One such comment of September 12, 2015, on Twitter was, "I am a student and I support #NoVatOnEducation. Education is not a product. It is our fundamental right!" Another social media activist posted her frustrations by tweeting, "#Bangladesh is the only country to tax private education! What a strange nation to think #education is a consumer good! #NoVatOnEducation" A student activist lamented, "When there is no duty on Alcoholic beverages, why should there be value-added taxes on a basic right like education?"Yet another activist commented on Twitter, "Education is not a luxury. It is a necessity. Hence it should be tax free. #NoVatOnEducation"

Framing of 'Education' as a Basic Right

Social media activists posted status updates with banner-like captions on social media that had various slogans that focused on pressing their demands. They framed education as their basic legal right and not any marketable commodity. Some of them quoted that their activism was a crusade against commercializing education, as one of them said, "Education is not a commodity but my basic right—this is a 'fight' for our basic right! This fight is for our legitimate right. Only one demand—scrapping of VAT! Our full support goes in for this demand."Many of them also questioned the justification behind the levying of VAT on private university education.

Some of them also demanded the highest allocation of budget in this sector by saying, "Raise allocation on education sector; stop the conspiracy against ruining the education system in the country" and, "We demand the highest endowment in the education sector" Many of them wanted the government's highest consideration and priority in this sector, as one of them posted, "Education above everything else!"
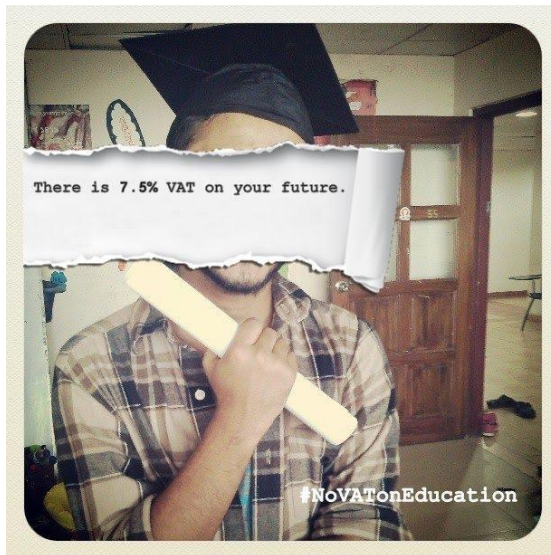
Figure 9: Meme on VAT on the Future
(Source: Facebook)

Many were critical about the government's stance, "Stop the farce with education" and "Raise your voice against the 'illegal' government's impractical decision."

Students' Expressions Online and Offline

The students and activists from other professions expressed their frustrations using social media platforms as well as offline platforms. They voiced their discontent regarding the government's impending proposal of value-added taxes on their education by posting, "There is 7.5% VAT on your future." They also were critical about the government's policy, and with their comments of disapproval expressed, "Education is not for Sale! Shame on (this) policy! We want justice!" The student activists were highly discouraged and crestfallen due to the government's initiative on tax collection, as many of them shared their frustrations online and offline with emotionally charged expressions such as:

"People of this country may be alive; yet the Humanity isn't; if the Humanity was truly alive, then how does one ask for VAT on education?"

"Our Ministers and MPs (Members of Parliament) who build mountains with the money of corruption will buy luxurious cars worth crores of Takas (crore means ten million) duty free; and (why do) we need to get education with 7.5% duty?! Govt.'s pure foolhardiness! #NoVatOnEducation"

Out of frustration, many expressed their family's hardship in meeting education expenses and used disparaging expressions about the lawmakers of the country, especially the Finance Minister:

"My Dad is Not an ATM Machine!" and "Why would my father fill Maal's (meaning the Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith) stomach?"

While protesting offline, many carried the placards that said, "If students were supposed to be stopped by bullets, then there would've been no #Bangladesh today #NoVATOnEducation"

The private university students, through their offline activism, declared the pressure on their families to pay for higher education. The students carried placards that said,

"VAT dibe amar baap; moja lutbe kar baap? (i.e., My Dad will pay the VAT; and whose Dad will enjoy the delight?) "Shikkha jati'r merudondo; VAT chay kon bhondo? (i.e., when the education is the backbone of a nation; why such bogus demands for VAT?)"

"Dhora jabena, chhoya jabena, bola jabena kotha; rokto diye pelaam shalar emon shwadhinota! (i.e., "Can't be caught, can't be touched, can't be spoken; I got such freedom which we had to buy with our blood!") Student activists indicated that the war of 1971 resulted in great loss of life. Nonetheless, the significance of this freedom became compromised if the nation's children had to pay taxes for their basic rights of education.
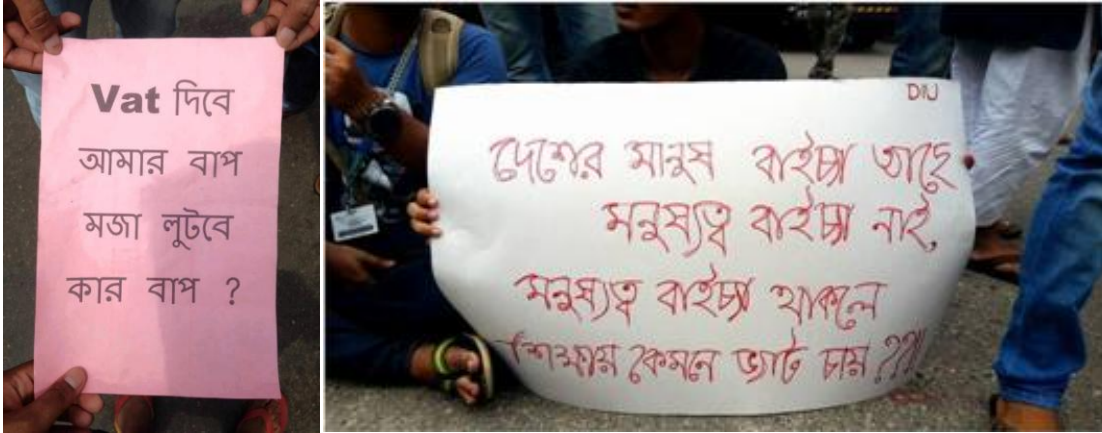
Figure 10:Manifestations of the Activists' Frustrations with Placards and Posters
(Source: Facebook)

The placards that were featured on the social media account of *Star Weekend Magazine* focused on the students exclaiming that their dads were not the automated teller machines or money dispensers and that money did not grow on the trees. Al Jazeera news, through its social media account The Stream (@AJStream), featured the movement on September 14, 2015, via a news story, which they titled, "Private school price hikes lead to protests in Bangladesh, following the hashtag #NoVATonEducation and #ParentsAreNotATMs."

In Support of Protests

In support of protests, people of many walks of life lodged complaints on social media:

Students of Private and Public Universities: There were many posts containing visuals with text captions in support of the campaign. Many students professed that, regardless of the classification whether they belonged to the public or the private universities, they were students of this country only and that they were in support for this cause. There were comments on these kinds of posts where the students touted that they were only going to pay their tuition and not any value added taxes on top of that. There were many memes with slogans in support of the campaign that were featured not only on Facebook but also on Twitter.

Figure 11: "My Dad is Not an ATM Booth; Does Money grow on the Trees?"
(Source: Facebook)

Memes with the quotes, "I am a taxpayer citizen of Bangladesh, and I support NO VAT ON EDUCATION," "Education is the backbone of a nation. I support #NoVatOnEducation," etc. was touted many times. Many students of different private universities used their university logos to make posters in support of the movement on Facebook and Twitter. The private university students that posted their support for the movement on social media following the hashtag #NoVATonEducation were from the following universities:

- East West University (EWU)

- Daffodil International University (DIU)

- University of Asia Pacific (UAP)

- Independent University Bangladesh (IUB)

- North South University (NSU)

- International Islamic University of Chittagong (IIUC)

- Khulna University (KU)

- Stamford University

- American International University Bangladesh (AIUB)

- Sher-E-Bangla Agricultural University (SAB)

- Biman University of Aviation and Engineering (BUAE)

- Leading University (LU)

- World University Bangladesh (WUB)

Students from public universities also joined this campaign. The students of public universities like BUET(Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology), DU(University of Dhaka), Jagannath University (JU) and National University (NU) expressed their solidarity in this movement: "I'm a BUETian/student of DU/student of national university (NU) & I support the protest against #Bangladesh govt.'s decision of VAT on education. #NoVATonEducation" Jagannath University (JU) students declared on Facebook, "Though we are the students of Jagannath University but we support #NoVATonEducation. Because, we are not used to make any differences between public and private universities, we believe in studentship!"A post on Facebook also featured the news that the High Court had issued a rule asking "Why the decision to impose a 7.5% VAT on the tuition fees of private universities, medical and engineering colleges should not be declared illegal?"

Pilgrims: 'Hajj' is the greatest religious congregation of the Muslims worldwide in a year. Pilgrims all over the world from the Muslim countries embark on more than a month-long journey to the birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia. They travel to Mecca and Medina, where their last Prophet of Islam preached. More than hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from Bangladesh join the Muslim brotherhood in the holy birthplace of the Prophet to perform the rituals of Hajj. During the #NoVATonEducation campaign, even the pilgrims from Bangladesh were in support of the campaign of the private university students in Dhaka. While in Dhaka, they shook hands

with the activists on their (the pilgrims') way to the airport, and a number of them posted with placards in support of this campaign even while performing the rituals in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Voluntary Organization/Students' Rescue During Attacks: By September 13, 2015, a youth organization called 'Red & Green' run by students posted using the #NoVATonEducation hashtag, declaring their willingness to help if the activists for this cause suffered any injury from police attack and therefore needed blood for emergency situations. In that post, they declared, they were always there by giving their contact numbers to reach them for help.

Law Enforcement Officials: The student activists were seen blocking an Army truck and showing a placard in support of the campaign.

The way this protest was conducted peacefully influenced the policemen to become friendly with the activists, contrary to normal times. The protest was recognized as the most peaceful in Bangladesh, unlike the other kinds of protests that encourage hostility. The prime English mainstream newspaper of the country, *The Daily Star*, reported the same. From its verified Facebook page, *The Daily Star* captioned a picture with a policeman at the center of the picture that was posted on September 13, 2015:"#TRENDING: Students demo against VAT, observed peacefully across #Dhaka #NoVatOnEducation"

Road Blockades, Rallies, and Sit-Downs in the Capital.

The movement reached its maximum intensity between September 10 and 14, 2015, when many of the students made the capital city virtually dysfunctional through their acts of blocking the roads. They literally sat down in the streets of Dhaka and did not let vehicles move any further. At one time, they even lay down on the roads.

Figure 12: Pilgrims in Support of the Cause
(Source: Facebook)

The entire city was crippled for days. While many people did not raise any objections regarding the students' demands and the their blocking the roads, there were some protests however, regarding this act in which some of the general public, particularly some students from the public universities, called this act as "irresponsible" and "insensitive."They questioned why should the general public suffer for the private university students' sakes? In this regard, however, the private university students' forum, through social media posts, issued their apologies by stating, "Roads closed for the development of the education sector! We sincerely apologize for this temporary inconvenience. ~ A humble request for your kind consideration from the Student of Anti-VAT Movement. #NoVATonEducation"

A social media activist tweeted about the typical scenario that outlined the experience of living in the capital city of Dhaka at this time. This was featured while sharing the picture of a '*gherao*' of the #NoVATonEducation activists on the streets, "Well, it wouldn't be Dhaka without a protest a month. #NoVatOnEducation." An aerial view of the blockade in Gulshan – 2 Circle was widely shared on Twitter having captions such as, "Gulshan-2 circle, Dhaka #Bangladesh blocked by uni students protest #NoVatOnEducation."

The Daily Star ✔ @dailystarnews · 13 Sep 2015

#TRENDING: Students demo against VAT, observed peacefully across #Dhaka bit.ly/1K69r5x #NoVatOnEducation

💬 2   🔁 9   ♡ 11   ✉

Figure 13: The Law Enforcement Agents Morally Supporting the Student Activists
(Source: Facebook, Twitter)

Figure 14: Road Blockade Real-Time Pictures and Activists' Apologies
(Source: Twitter, Facebook)

This was shared by an international visitor traveling to Bangladesh at that time. A sit-down protest picture of September 13, 2015, of students blocking traffic was also shared on this platform with descriptions like, "Students #blocktraffic to protest #tax on edu part of #NoVatOnEducation crippling Dhaka #Bangladesh."

Another story with the picture caption "Over a thousand (of) students blockaded Panthapath intersection in Protest. Dhaka #Bangladesh #NoVATOnEducation" was shared on Twitter. Many of social media activists also shared the real-time picture of traffic gridlocks on

the roads (in front of a private university) portraying the impasse situation there, hashtagging with the caption #YouthPower.

Some prominent private universities of Dhaka touted their presence in social media by announcing, "#NSU join the caravan #novatoneducation #Bangladesh."The students posted pictures of their processions, rallies, while protesting offline regarding their demand for the withdrawal of VAT and many of those photo posts with comments went viral. One of the captions of such posts on September 13, 2015, was "#NoVatOnEducation Student Movement paralyzed #Bangladesh." Many photo posts on social media featured different student rallies across the capital city of Dhaka (e.g. Mirpur Road, Panthapath, Gulshan, Dhanmondi, etc.)

Against Public Suffering from Road Blockade.

Some social media activists spoke against the public suffering that the road blockades created. On September 13, 2015, one of the renowned educators, who had been the Vice Chancellor of a private university in Dhaka, asserted by tweeting, "Protesting students have made their point. Further protests should not impede road movement of Dhakaites! #NoVatOnEducation."This message was directed to the student activists who were still blocking the roads after the government's verbal assurance that it would look at the matter closely and that it was time for activists to clear the roads.

Another social media activist lamented on Twitter about the frustrations from school closure due to the deadlock situation pertaining to the movement: "The irony of the #NoVatOnEducation protests is that many primary and secondary schools have closed as a result of the roads being blocked." This was a situation of distress pertaining to a particular movement that the general public had no chance of escaping.

Figure 15: Student Movement Creating Traffic Gridlock
(Source: Facebook)

'Stop Attacks on Education'

Many voices used social media, particularly Facebook, to urge the government as well as the general public, especially the private and the public university students, not to indulge in badmouthing each other's position by slinging mud.

One upset voice opined on social media:

When so many countries have made their education systems free of cost, so that there remain ways open forgetting well-informed and educated citizens in the country, in our country, on the other hand, people are paying through their noses to meet the just the expense of tuition fees each semester, let alone any provision of paying VAT on top of the tuition expense!

The Voice of Dhaka University Community on social media grieved on the "immature comments" of the private and public university students about each other.

Figure 16: A Post to Stop Attacks on Education
(Source: Facebook)

This forum regretted this behavior. It said that it was not wise for the private university students to expect that the public university students will take to streets for any causes that were directly related to the private universities, particularly on the VAT issue. On the other hand, any public university students also should not indulge in criticizing private university students without giving moral support to this just cause. It also stated that Bangladesh was a tiny country that had so many divisions already and that they should not find new divisions but rather build a culture of compassion. It hoped everyone should be aware of this onwards. Not all public university students were in favor of the private university students' blocking the roads. Some public university students were in favor and others were critical. Some of the public university students join hands with the activists yet others opposed. A post on what should be the proper decorum of the public and the private university students for this cause both offline and online went viral.

Peaceful Protests

People from all walks of life protested, even the street-side vendors selling puffed rice displayed 'No VAT, steer clear!' captions on their bags. Some activists shaved 'NO VAT' on

their heads with their customized hairstyle. These contents were posted on Facebook and Twitter.

The Private University Students Alliance, in their Facebook post, discussed their peaceful protest activities and their grief on the unwarranted blame/criticisms hurled at them:

> This is a testament of how peaceful we are! The peaceful passage of the honorable pilgrims shows how honest we are in our demands. How sincere we are in that; the raised hands are proof of that. The police shot at us and we passed the lunch car they were carrying. The journalist brothers gave false news in our name but no one had any misgivings to provide them drinking water in scorching heat. We, the students, ourselves guarded all the school vans while letting them cross the blockade. Are we still bad?

Formidable Forces and Indomitable Spirits.

The students of the private universities in Dhaka, with their voice of protests continued online and offline the legacy of their ancestors' indomitable spirits in different remonstrations. This theme will illustrate their campaigns against VAT.

"Water Cannons will do No Good; Bring a Dragon Instead!"

The government deployed water cannons on the streets of Dhaka to scatter the demonstrating students. The students, with their reasonably priced smartphones and affordable internet on the go, while demonstrating on the roads, grabbed the real-time footage of the water cannons.

A picture caption (Figure 19) posted by one of the activists about the water cannons deployed in the streets read, "#Police preparing to flex their muscles against the #Students. #Bangladesh #NoVatOnEducation."

Figure 17: Peaceful Protest
(Source: Facebook)

During the offline activism, a snapshot of a poster went viral on social media. The picture

caption of that Facebook post was, "Water cannons will do no good; bring a dragon

instead!"Other pictures about the water cannons on the avenues of the capital were featured on

Twitter.

With various kinds of captions touting their indomitable spirits, the students only

promoted their formidable and unwavering stance of astounding commitment towards their

demand, which was about a total scrapping of the value-added taxes on private university

education costs.

While the government employed water cannons to disperse the protesting students, the

students persisted. They wrote graffiti on the yellow water cannons and made memes based on

the government's action of deploying the water cannons on them.

Figure 18: Offline Activism Rallies, Student Leadership and Hacking Message by Cyber-71
(Source: Twitter, Facebook)
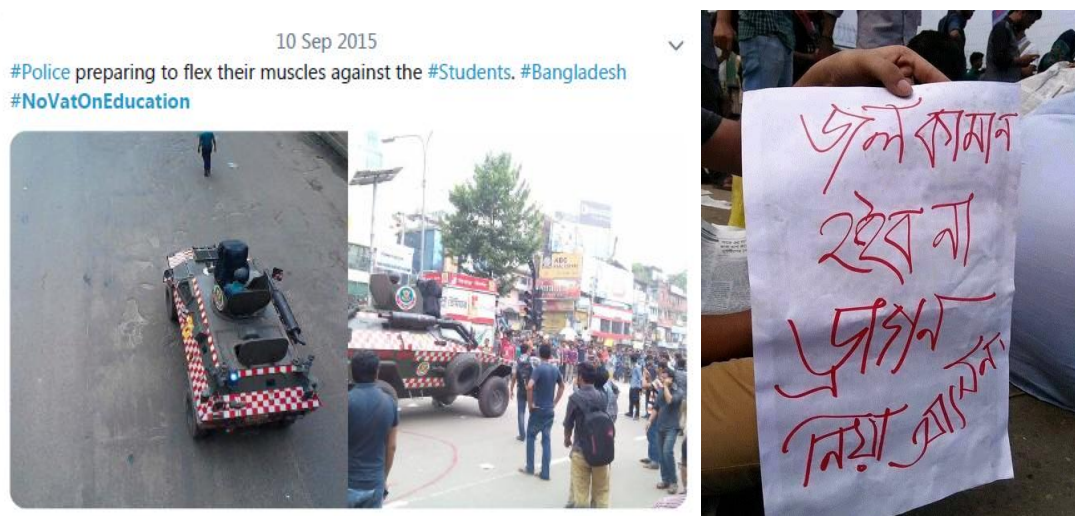
Figure 19: Government's Deployment of Water Cannons related Witty Messages
(Source: Twitter, Facebook)

Social media activists used the picture of the "NO VAT" graffiti on the water cannons not only on Facebook but also on Twitter. A meme on this went viral that also featured a stack of puffed rice (Muri) where a vendor was featured selling it, with a caption, "NO VAT Muri Kha." "Muri Kha" is an expression similar to fall dead, go fly a kite, go fry an egg, steer clear, hit the road, etc. The demonstrating students also held placards where they wrote, "Ready to sacrifice my life but will not give a penny as VAT."

A picture posted from a verified forum account went viral that described the daunting force that proclaimed their unconquerable stance by reflecting on the history of Bangladesh movements by saying, "If students were supposed to be stopped by bullets, then there would've been no #Bangladesh today #NoVATonEducation."These posts affirmed the students' stance that they were not in any way prepared to give in.

During the campaign, students used the slogans, "(We) Won't Pay VAT; Shoot (Us)!"The student activists proclaimed this stance of theirs regarding VAT payment in various ways.

Figure 20: General Public's Protest and Graffiti on the Streets of Dhaka
(Source: Twitter)

They posted the image clips of their offline activism on Facebook that went viral. The clips mainly showed the placards they held while taking part in the rallies and the memes they made.

The captions for these placards were something like, "VAT Dibo Na; Guli Kor! (Meaning, Won't pay VAT; Shoot!)," or "VAT Dimu Na; Ki Korbi Kor! (Meaning, Won't pay the VAT; Do whatever you please!)," "VAT Hoite Shabdhan! (Meaning, Beware of VAT)," etc.

These image clips of demonstrations in close shots and aerial views were re-shared by the student activists on Facebook.

The slogans were like, "I rebel, and therefore, I exist!" The copy for this slogan (Figure 23) was:

The East-West University has blocked the Rampura road today… If tomorrow, AIUB, Southeast, Prime Asia makes the Kakoli Road out of service; NSU, IUB does the same for the Bashundhra Road; BRAC does it for the Mohakhali Road; AUST blocks the

Tejgaon Road; GREEN, BUBT does it for the Mirpur Road; UIU, DIU, ASIA PACIFIC,

ULAB does the same for Dhanmondi Roads then what else is required? We won't pay

VAT; Stop us if you can!

Figure 21: Student Activist's Placard Caption Conveying their Message
(Source: Twitter)

Figure 22: Placards Containing "We Won't Pay VAT. Shoot Us!"

(Source: Twitter)

ইস্টওয়েস্ট আজ রামপুরা রোড অফ করেছে....
কাল যদি,
AIUB, SOUTHEAST,PRIMEASIA কাকলি রোড অফ
করে
NSU,IUB বসুন্ধরা রোড অফ করে
BRAC মহাখালী রোড অফ করে
AUST তেজগাঁও রোড অফ করে
GREEN,BUBT মিরপুর রোড অফ করে
UIU,DIU,ASIA PACIFIC, ULAB ধানমন্ডি রোড অফ
করে তাহলে আর কি লাগে....
ভ্যাট দিমুনা পারলে ঠ্যাকান...
#noVatonEducation

Figure 23: Student Activists' Slogans
(Source: Facebook)

The students also organized candlelight vigils during the offline protests in different roads in the evenings. The footage of these protests was widely shared on YouTube during the campaign.

Derision of the 'VATMAN' (Mockery of the Finance Minister)

Throughout the campaign, activists made memes, posters, cartoons, and parodies of YouTube videos mocking the Finance Minister of Bangladesh, A. M. A. Muhith, and his comments and attitude regarding value-added taxes on private university education, as well as his unfounded statements about student demographics. The students were enraged with Muhith's speculative comment coming from his firm assumption that the private university students were from rich backgrounds, for whom, spending Taka 1,000 (US$11.76) per day was not a problem. A meme was created to mock the comment: "Never knew we were so rich until today!"These memes went viral and framed him as the "villain" in this crusade.

Figure 24: Candlelight Vigil during #NoVATonEducation Campaign
(Source: Facebook)

The protesters portrayed Muhith as the only dastardly person in this battle and used

pictures that connoted to his "evil" intentions. One of social media activists lamented about his

luck for sharing the same alma mater with the Minister: "That awkward moment when you find

out you and Abul Maal Abdul Muhith went to same school and college. #NoVatOnEducation

#NotSoProudAlumni"

There is an adage in the country that many people firmly believe in which is,

"Education is the backbone of the nation."Activists framed that Muhith was on a mission to

break that backbone.

Figure 25: "The Private University Students' Daily 'Pocket Money'"
(Daily Minor Expense)

The students attributed Muhith's "failure" in securing loans from the World Bank to be the prime reason why he conceived the idea of managing the money through an alternative source, namely by imposing VAT on the private university students. The meme (Figure 26) was shared on 9GAG—the popular site for memes, breaking stories, photos, and viral videos on the internet.

The figure (Figure 28) depicts a cartoon based on the Muffling State of Education in the country with the value-added taxes and meme containing Muhith's unfounded comments about the demographics of private university students. The meme portrayed the Minister's comment that said, "Private varsity students spend 1000 Taka per day." This meme also depicted the

subsequent confusion of a typical private varsity student thinking to himself, "Uncle Maal, never did we realize we were so rich!"

University Closure with the Plea of "Eid Vacation!"

Amid the impasse on September 13, 2015, a post went viral mainly amongst the students of Independent University due to a sudden decision of the administration to close the university with the plea of Eid vacation. Interestingly, the university on the same day put out a notice regarding late registration and add/drop about the courses that were supposed to begin on September 14, 2015. All on a sudden, the university decided to close for a religious vacation. Eid-ul-Azha is one of the largest religious celebrations of the people of Muslim faith. The students possibly were anticipating a vacation later on, yet the sudden closure of the university surprised many of the students and led to engagements via social media regarding the university's strategy.
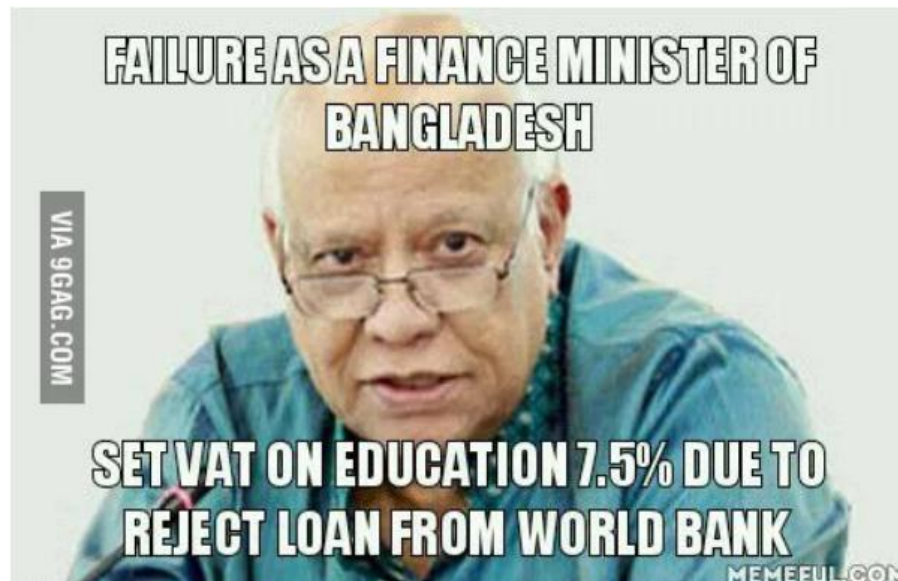
Figure 26: Student Activists' Meme Criticizing the Finance Minister
(Source: Twitter)

Figure 27: Publicly Shared Memes and Cartoons on #NoVATonEducation
(Source: Facebook)

Figure 28: Publicly Shared Cartoons and Meme using Humor
(Source: Facebook, Twitter)

Many surmised that the University took this decision to suddenly close the campus to avoid any untoward situation emanating from the student protests. One of the activists commented, "IUB OFF!!! Eid vacation of IUB starting from today ... Good strategy of Govt. but let's see (if) they can stop students or not. Hopefully they can't ...#NoVatOnEducation"

The Saga of Flowers vs. Weapons.

On September 13, 2015, the students greeted the policemen with flowers once the policemen came to oversee the street protest situation of the students' offline activism. The students also took pictures with them. The post went viral both on Facebook and Twitter platforms. Twitter captions about those posts were, "Flowers vs. weapons!! #NoVatOnEducation" and "Students protesting #NoVatOnEducation gave Flowers to Police. Nice gesture & good lesson …"On September 13, 2015, one of the activists posted on social

media saying, "Police came up with guns and the students welcomed them with flowers. #NoVatOnEducation #Bangladesh #SaveBangladesh.

Posts about Winning the Crusade.

Once the government withdrew the 7.5% value-added tax on private university education, activists announced their victory by calling the crusade a success. A video about the VAT withdrawal titled "VAT on pvt. universities withdrawn after mass protests" was shared by *The Daily Star* on their verified Twitter account. This video featured the victory cheers by the students. One of them tweeted about their win by saying, "#Bangladesh ministry decides to withdraw VAT on private universities."
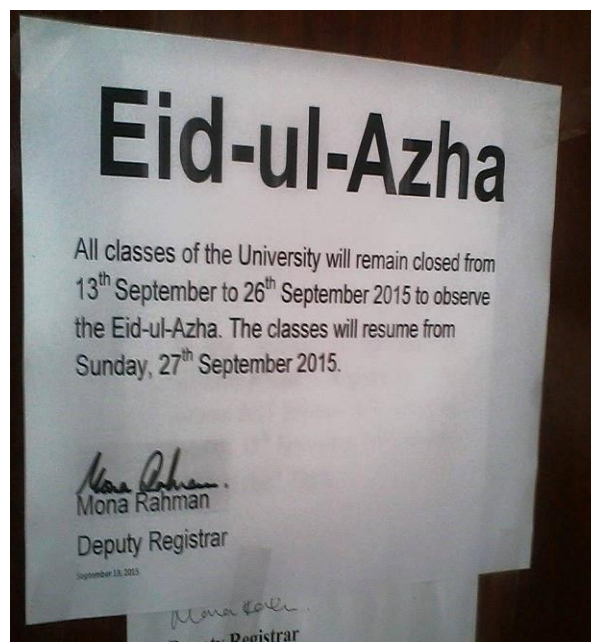
Figure 29: A Sudden Eid Vacation Notice
(Source: Facebook)

Figure 30: When Police Accepted Roses from the Activists
(Source: Facebook, Twitter)

#NoVatOnEducation movement has won #Dhaka." The student activists flaunted their

victory by posting on social media. They could grab their real-time pictures via their

smartphones and instantly post them online via the affordable internet packages they had

subscribed to for connectivity on the go. These photos mostly were of the jubilation in the crowd

and victory signs using their fingers while posing for the photographs together in groups. The

photo captions were like, "Cheer up! We won!" "Yeh! There a historic #triumph for

#NoVATonEducation #Movement organized by Students of different #PrivateUniversities in

#Bangladesh" or, something like, "Finally no VAT on education! Congratulations to all of you!

You deserve it!" "Finally #Bangladesh removed VAT, students celebrate VAT withdrawal

decision. #NoVATonEDUCATION." Felicitation messages even across the globe started

pouring in, saying, "Impressed that #NoVatOnEducation protests forced govt. action" and

"Congratulations to the students of #Bangladesh who defeated an unfair tax through peaceful protest! #NoVATonEducation"

In addition to the individual and group posts on social media, the mainstream media also followed by covering the posts on students' victory celebrations on their social media pages. The student activists re-shared them (mostly the posts about victory cheers) too on social media. Additionally, online news portal bdnews24 and the mainstream newspaper *The Daily Star* posted online on their social media page.

There were about 50 universities (mostly private) that made a collage using their logos in a congratulatory message to each other while applauding the Bangladeshi private university students. The title of this message was, "We came, We saw, and We Conquered. The Victory is dedicated to the Nation. Thank you for your Support."
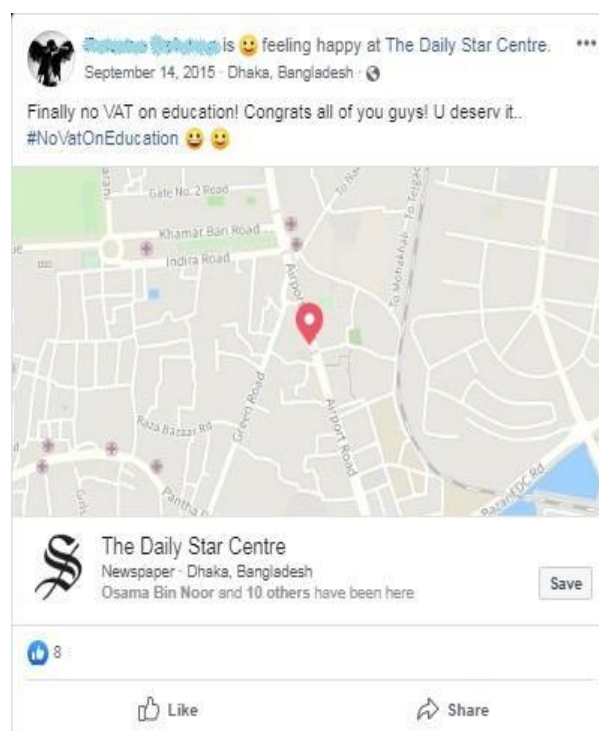
Figure 31: Mainstream Media's Verified Social Media Account Post on Students' Victory
(Source: Facebook)

The Daily Star's weekend magazine was among the few mainstream media outlets that covered this student movement. They used a symbolic victory visual supporting the cause. Also, on September 14, a mobile food delivery marketplace named the Food Panda also announced a 7.5% discount on food delivery if they received any order using the code "NoVAT."
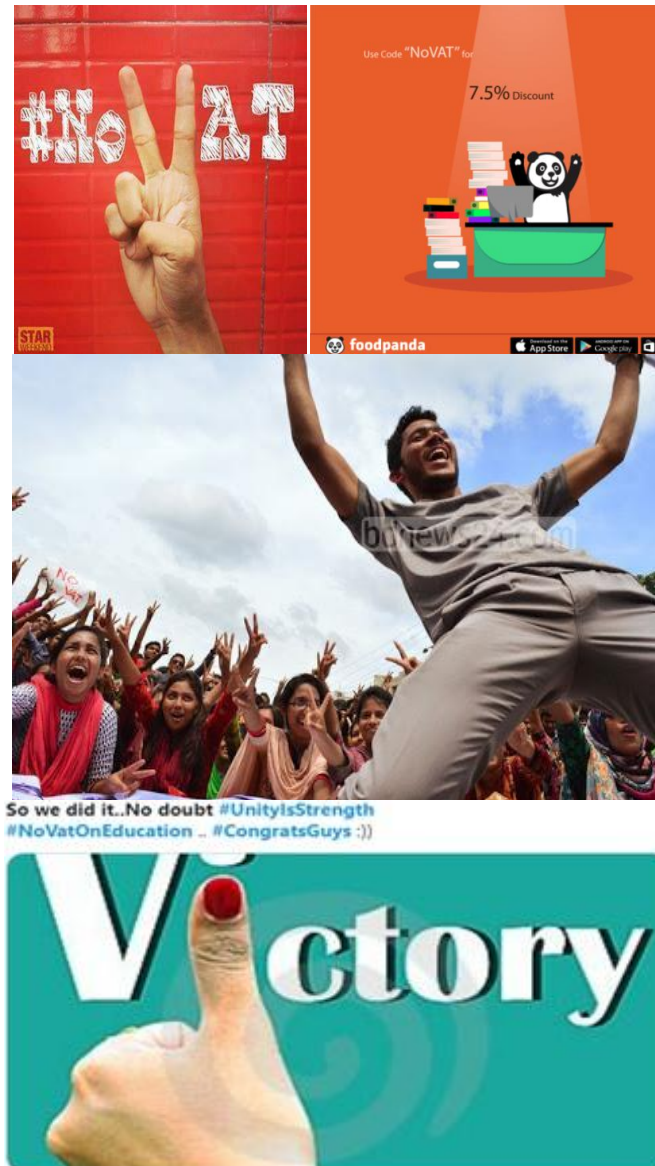
Figure 32: Posts about the Historic Triumph and the Victory Insignia
(Source: Facebook, Twitter)

The activists shared the news of VAT withdrawal on Twitter, framing it as a victory with captions like, "#Bangladesh ministry decides to withdraw VAT on private universities. #NoVatOnEducation movement has won #Dhaka" and cheers such as, "Yahoo… Finally #NoVATonEducation" On September 14, 2015, more tweets started to come in as some of the activists were elated at their victory: "Unity is the key to success! The Private University students of #Bangladesh proved it once again #NoVatOnEducation #StudentsPower." and cheers like "So we did it...No doubt #UnityIsStrength #NoVatOnEducation... #CongratsGuys :))" Many activists also hailed the merit of online activism even before the victory (September 10, 2015) by saying, "Online activism proved its strength, students who couldn't be on the streets showed their support through social media. #NoVatOnEducation."Many activists used a victory insignia throughout social media once the success was achieved.

After the historic victory, many outlets, including *The Daily Star* (*The Star Weekend Magazine*), cross-posted their feature articles by reflecting on the achievement of the students via transversal politics with two different tweets quoting from their published articles:

"Unlike any other street agitation, which creates panic and chaos, the protests of the private university students were peaceful (Liton& Habib, 2015),"and "They have set an example for politicians, and given hope to the country that they can rise above petty partisan politics and get their demands met by being logical, consistent and coherent (Sabur, 2015)."

Interview Data

Group: Student Social Activists

Who the Student Activists and the Student Leaders were. In the sample, the student social activists who participated in the interview were university students during the 2015 #NoVATonEducation movement in the capital city of Dhaka. In total, three of the six

participants among the student social activists who volunteered for the interview were the students of the University of Liberal Arts (ULAB), Military Institute of Science and Technology (MIST), and Update Dental College and Hospital (UpDCH). Many of these participants were in their 4th, 7th, and 8th semesters during the movement. Among these six participants, all of them actively took part in the movement not only online but also offline. Among these activists, three assumed leadership positions in the movement.

What the Student Activists Recalled. The interviewees reflected on what they found to be unique about this movement. One of them said:

This was a strong and positive movement with no violence. We believed, "Education" wasn't a product or a commodity! The teachers also supported the movement. Not only students but the parents too were flustered at this (the government's directive); almost all disagreed with this policy.

Generally, the public stays away from any place where the police force is involved. Nonetheless, when some students started going to those settings, forgoing all these barriers, the other students also came forward. Then the parents also let their children join them. Framing "education" as one's fundamental right, one of the student's further clarified by saying:

I think the government overreacted to this matter. I believe education should be free for all at all levels, whether (offered by) public or private (schools)…Everyone needs education. Even if when it's not free, once the VAT is added on top of that, that does not make sense to me since I am in the process of becoming the country's asset by getting educated, and I will be responsible for taking the next generation forward, for which I would have to pay VAT; which is... an unfavorable matter.

One of the participants pointed out what was unique (about the movement) regarding the police and activists' stance and interactions:

The police were initially at odds with the protesting students due to the traffic jams created by the student sit-downs but when they realized that the students were protesting peacefully; and that it was actually the matter of students' rights, they were fine. Even (at one point of time) the police were greeted with flowers (by the student activists).

A participant indicated a vital aspect about this movement:

One thing is crucial that I want to point out, generally all the student movements (in this country/Bangladesh) starts from the Dhaka University (students) but in this case only, this movement was initiated only by the private university (students). It started from a couple of Universities, and soon the other (private) Universities joined them, and before long, all became united for this cause!

Another participant spoke about what inspired him to join this movement:

As I recall, to me, the question of paying VAT on education, although it was professed that the VAT was levied on the Universities and not on the students, yet it to me it sounded a bit odd, as to why there should be value-added taxes on education! Although I don't know if other countries charged any value-added taxes on education, I thought, how could a poor country like Bangladesh, which is not even a middle-income country, could charge that since we already pay a huge amount for getting the education. I thought 7% tax, which is too tough for us to bear, would ultimately be sourced from the students in one way or another.

In fact, he said that they remembered, in their first semester, they were charged about 2800 takas during their registration for that purpose. In other places in this world, where students

were given scholarships to encourage studentship, they complained that were being charged for their education, which he expressed as, "(this) could not definitely be a good decision!"

The student social activists also outlined how they participated in the #NoVATonEducation offline as well as online, and the role of the social media in organizing the movement. A participant, when speaking about his contribution in the movement, reflected on his participation:

I tried to participate in the offline activism in two occasions. I felt really upset why should there be VAT on something (essential) like education? I also shared the social media (Facebook) posts that were legitimate since I could not shy away from an important and legitimate issue like this!

They expressed they re-shared a lot, especially the updates (inspiring Facebook texts, posts, YouTube videos) from their university and from the page based on #NoVATonEducation, not to mention changing their profile pictures and using the hashtag for this cause. Facebook was mostly used, while YouTube and Instagram were less popular during that time. When asked why Facebook was used more than the other platforms, one of them opined:

This was because Facebook had a greater presence in Bangladesh and therefore, users were more on this platform than on Twitter or on Instagram. Currently, FB users from Bangladesh are 33 million, and only 1.9 of us are on Instagram, so of course Facebook. Plus, the affordability of smartphone and availability and affordability of internet had a role to play here. Before 2013 and 2014 we didn't have access to broadband internet connection but by the time of the movement, many of us had access to that and many didn't have internet at their homes yet we had mobile internet (on our phones), which contributed to having information on our fingertips!

When answering the question about what role social media played in this movement, one of the participants expressed the relative absence of the mainstream media in covering the story:

> The SM played the main role I guess in organizing this movement. Since there was no coverage in the mainstream media, therefore, the social media was the only news source for us. It was good, so I would say the social media.

Here, only one or two mainstream newspapers in the country reported on the movement. For quite some time, even these newspapers did not find the student protests were newsworthy enough. The few newspapers that ultimately started to report the story were *The Daily Star* (English news daily), the *Prothom Alo* (Bengali news daily), *The Dhaka Tribune* and BDNews24.com (English online news portals). But, those too, started to follow up with the news reports after the movement started to take momentum. Therefore, student social media activists felt the noticeable absence of the mainstream news media and realized the value of real-time nature of the reporting of specific incidents that seemed important to them. They also expressed what the merit of the social media to capture the stories real-time was:

> If an incident happens, with offline, it's really tough to communicate (i.e., relaying the information), whereas, with social media, it is not that hard to do that! For example, the initial police attacks on students, if there were not any social media usage, how many people would have known about it, I doubt! However, when that news went online, not only East West, but also the other private Universities got to know.

Many public university professors advised their students not to join the movement. However, once it became known that it was a peaceful protest, even from the public university students joined the private university student activists in participating in the movement as moral support. A student activist opined about the merit of the access to online communication,

Without online, only EWU (East-West University) students would have known or maybe people from the EWU surrounding areas, and none else. But, due to dissemination of information via online, not only the whole country, but people throughout the world got to know about it.

One of the participants detailed how the student activists coordinated the campaign via social media, saying, *"The plans and programs used to be declared online and other students, while following the notices would gather in the designated premises."*When asked if he or she? faced any impediments from anywhere while organizing the movement, he/she? flashed back on the indecisiveness from the parents and the university authorities regarding the precarious situation involving VAT protests on education. What one of them said was:

Nowadays, to be honest, we think a lot about so many things before taking any steps in organizing anything. I heard many faced these kinds of problems while organizing (the movement); I heard many faced troubles for sharing on the social media. Initially everyone were confused regarding what stance they needed to take in the #NoVATonMovement issue. Some authorities said, 'Yes, go for it, yet some others from the authority said, don't go for it; if you do; we shall issue you a transfer certificate. 'This was confusing to most of us what should be done.

According to the interview participants, most didn't face any obstructions from the private universities. Rather, the private universities encouraged the students to participate in the movement, nevertheless maybe didn't say anything directly through their actions. According to one of them:

It was like (some of) our teachers encouraged us to go and stand in protests (on the streets). In fact, many of us students, at one point of time got to realize that ultimately this

VAT was due from the Universities concerned and not the students. I don't know

although the Universities profess that they are not for profit but maybe they also do a

little profit somewhere and maybe that is because they wanted to prevent it (the value-

added taxes). They possibly thought the students may disagree to give VAT saying that it

was not them but the Universities authorities rather should be paying the VAT, from their

share of profits, if any. And maybe that is why they encouraged the students to come

forward in the protest so that through this campaign, ultimately the question of VAT is

waived.

Group: Student Leader Social Activists

Who the Student Activists and the Student Leaders were. In the sample, the student

leaders were university students during the 2015 #NoVATonEducation movement in the capital

city of Dhaka. In total, six participants among the student social activists volunteered for the

interview, many in their 4th, 7th, and 8th semesters during the movement. All of them actively

took part in the movement, not only online but also offline. Among the six participants, five of

them were student activists from private universities; one of them was from a public university.

Three of them assumed leadership positions in the #NoVATonEducation movement.

Who Took the Lead in this Movement? The three student activists in the interview

participant sample of the #NoVATonEducation movement who took the lead were from a

Liberal Arts college and a private dental college and hospital. Three of them were activists early

in their undergraduate studies, during the #NoVAT movement. Two of the leaders protested with

the other students and took the lead while protesting from the frontline in the rallies. One of these

three leaders was mainly active on social media as a guide to student activists in setting their

agenda. This particular leader, using his existing influential connections, lobbied for international

coverage regarding the movement. All three of them had been involved with the campaign heavily.

One of the leaders wrote a campaign song for this movement. Another leader joined him and they both led rallies while performing the song. They were at the front with microphones, and amplifiers, while leading the procession. One leader's contribution (from the private dental college) to the movement was providing technical support in guiding engagement with international media via Twitter, engaging his institution in the movement, and involving his personal acquaintances, whom he told to use the hashtag in particular messages to get more attention and generate more positive effects.

What do the Student Leaders Recall? The leaders talked about what they remembered from their own experience and with their own perspective of how they saw it. One of them recalled demanding a total scrapping of the taxes on education and cautioning about possible fruition of a greater movement against the taxes unless the government withdrew its tentative plans. Soon after that, some of the influencer students of the private universities around Dhanmondi liaised among themselves to create a platform named *'VAT-Birodhi Shikkharthi Oikko'* (Anti-VAT Students' Alliance) for this cause. Initially, approximately 20-25 students from different private universities, as well as some student leaders even from other public universities like Dhaka University's Chhatra League, Chhatra Union, 5-6 University of Liberal Arts students, a couple of students from the East-West University, a number of students from Daffodil University, Stamford University, and other student political wings/associations got together. Students were not only from the private business schools, private science, and liberal arts colleges mentioned; a couple of students from the private medical Anwar Khan College also joined.

Another of these student leaders recalled that he made instantaneous unscripted rap music while on the roads. Two of these student activists used the famous songs that were the lifeblood of many earlier movements of Bengali culture—the country's most famous poet, Nazrul Islam, and his rebellious songs, too. These songs reminded them of rebellious lyrics that proclaimed:

"Destroy those iron gateways of the jail, the stone platform, and the shackles of worship. O' my young Lord of Destruction, sound your incredible conch of extermination...!"

This leader also talked about the rap song he made for this occasion:

I personally made a song about the #NoVATonEducation movement. I was a rapper and was involved in social activism. Therefore, peers asked me to create a song based on this movement. So I made a RAP song within a day on #NoVATonEducation.

This rap song in the native language Bengali portrayed the realities (the private university students' struggle) relating to the #NoVATonEducation movement. The song was composed during the intense protests in the last week of the movement timeline. He uploaded this song on YouTube and cross-posted it on Facebook. The music was adapted from an American musician's song.

Talking about in what capacity they were involved, one of these leaders had said:

I was at the forefront of the movement because I am good at public speaking. I had performed in front of a couple of thousands of people and talked to so many people, so I was approached by those who knew me personally for a long time back. Therefore, they approached me to say something and I realized people listened to what I say.

He utilized his opinion and the art of storytelling via his songs to provide support and encouragement to those activists who fought for this cause.

While working as a representative of youth, the leader from the dental college, along with his team, offered help to those who were lacking in availability of social media. With his own platform, he connected the youth digitally in the country and abroad. He also extended skill-based training to empower the young people and worked as a connection to employ those youth through the (college, university, and school-based) campus ambassadors in the 64 districts of Bangladesh

The leader who used his own platform that promoted the notion of being united for advocacy also participated in #NoVATonEducation. He acknowledged this as one of the peaceful protests in Bangladesh:

> This was a protest unique of its kind, which was not only carried out by the students — there were their guardians, the general public, many politicians, the socially respected icons, and the intellectuals behind their back for this well-accepted protest movement. This probably is the reason why the government, ultimately, even when a tad late, withdrew the value-added tax requirement. It was an example that the youth could protest so peacefully for a cause when united.

He also recalled that this was unlike any other campaigns, such as the #RoadSafety movement, where no such rumors could spread as it did not reach the threshold of any violence, and according to him, one of the reasons it (The #RoadSafety movement) failed to reach its goal was "the school students were immature and hot-headed to have the abilities to separate the right from the wrong."This did not happen during the #NoVATonEducation or #QuotaReform movements since these movements were driven by the matured, university students. He further explained by saying:

They were past their teenage stage and were in the more matured, adult stages as they were more grown-up individuals, who were not inclined to create any mayhem by indulging into immature, juvenile fights, or hot-headed stance regarding the issue involved.

They explained that the police attack on East-West students was the main driving force towards unifying all the students in various universities in Dhaka. Within one or two days, there were people who persuaded the protesters to back off, saying that the protest would be fruitless. From that point onwards, the students blocked the roads. However, the public stance towards the movement was surprisingly empathetic towards the private university students. The general public, who usually showed signs of anger due to road blockage or rallies in protestation, was of the opinion that, since the students were fighting for a good cause, they would endure this suffering.

The leaders opined that everyone collectively tried their best to do their parts as influencers. There was a page called Private University Alliance run by a group of the same name. This group kept everyone updated on the latest happenings. Those students (opinion leaders) who had referent power and fan followings used the call for action (CFA) to motivate followers. They were referred to as "campus heroes (influencers)."The women influencers would not stay until late nights; they returned home earlier than the male influencers. Some of the influencers faced threats were harassed, and their IDs were hacked by some unscrupulous groups, but those hackers could not be identified or traced. The #NoVATonEducation movement was a success and became a precursor to later prominent movements like #QuotaReform and #RoadSafety.

What Inspired them? One of the student leaders recalled, "We see education as our basic right and therefore the effort was not to treat this basic right as a marketable commodity."He also thought that they had to pursue this motivation for a long time:

> I wouldn't want to say this campaign was an overnight success. Many of us worked day and night for days together for this particular cause, giving our best efforts and toil to make it a success through our hard work for a considerable amount of time. I believe that it is our demand for not making the basic right like education a marketable commodity that had been going on for a long time with the private universities.

His comrade, another student leader in the movement and participant for this study, used to work part-time during his studentship to cover his education costs. He couldn't rationalize the reasoning of the "after-tax take-home pay" he used to pay for his education:

> If I pay a double tariff based on the salary I draw after-tax and pay for my education for which I again would have to pay the tariff; (it) didn't make any sense to me! Education is not a luxury; it's a need! It is crucial for a country's advancement.

Speaking about the dearth of facilities of tertiary education in the public sector, in the country, he expressed:

> Public universities thrive on the taxpayers' money; then why should the Private Universities pay the tariff on educational facilities! The number of public universities in this country is limited, whereas, the demand of such institutions is high. During the earlier times, there was less demand of tertiary education, and the population also was less. Now, there are not as many public universities to meet the increasing demands of tertiary education!

Speaking about what triggered him to take part in this movement, the former dental student-leader expressed:

I should say I myself am a victim of the fact that such exorbitant cost was the cost of education that my father could hardly meet the expense. When I saw that the students abroad were used to the system of earning and sponsoring their own education, nonetheless, our culture was different. Students abroad were earning and spending money for their own lives and their own studies, their education system was such. In our society, we get married comparatively late, and our children are conceived late, by the time the children finish education, the parents get really old and the children, therefore, need time to establish themselves in their lives. I studied in a private dental college, it was really expensive, and it was very difficult to bear such an expensive education. Based on the same reason and logic, many of us thought that we needed to do something when it came to the question of value-added tax levying on education. We pay VAT in every aspect of our lives, and why we should pay value-added tax when it came to the question of getting 'education!' whereas, in many countries, the education was free!

The rationale behind the refusal to pay VAT was outlined by this student leader by reflecting on the scenario that Bangladesh was a developing country. Here, he opined:

If the government does not subsidize in developing education sector, in enhancing the quality of education, the quality of teachers, the quality of syllabus, and if the system is not given proper attention for development, then how the students would be able to develop themselves? See, what is the result of spending so much when there is an effort to digitalize the country's every sector, then are the students ready enough for their future jobs? The methods they are used to, when they will be going to the employment sector,

they'll find that the system has revamped itself totally! Realizing all these, they needed to

act then! And when the unity is formed, people become conscious that they need to act

and go for it and this realization spread throughout the country's different districts.

Everyone felt they had a stake in this matter and it was the demand of that particular time.

Another of the leaders recalled his experience by reflecting on history. He said that the

private universities in Bangladesh were established in 1992. Before 2015, there was another

attempt to impose taxes on private university education:

It was possibly around 2012, or maybe around 2010, I don't exactly remember; that

attempt was also foiled by the students via offline activism as at that time as many

activists didn't use social media sites as the main platforms since that was not as popular

with them (for activism) at that time (as of later). During 2015, when it was again

proposed, possibly about 4 months before the month of September 2015 when the

movement reached intensity, the protests started to build up... around June/July 2015.

During June 2015, it was proposed in the national budget to levy 10% of taxes (on private

university education), then it was trimmed down to 7.5%.

The student leaders also pointed out the fact that there was little mainstream media

coverage on this movement, if any at all. One of them recounted:

At the inception, there was not much coverage of this movement in the press, except

however, only a number of dailies like *The Daily Star* and *The Dhaka Tribune*. It is the

social media which actually was at the forefront and not the mainstream media.

Mainstream media later followed, particularly during the time once the campaign reached

its intensity but not very much during the initial stage of the campaign. *The Daily Star*

covered the news on the campaign the most. A number of students like one or two of the

ULAB students at that time who already were the contributors of the English daily— the Daily Star played a part in featuring the campaign. Also, *The Star Campus* section whose editor was a (Bangladeshi) celebrity had featured the campaign in a grand way.

The Leaders' Reflection on Offline Activism. During the early stages of the movement, soon after the most of their classes got dismissed around 4 PM, the students gathered around the campus of their universities. They soon realized that this way of meeting on street was not effective. Initially, they protested in front of their own campuses. Later, they made plans to jointly go for activism efforts with other universities. Primarily, for the gathering spot was Road 7/A of Dhanmondi for the Universities around that area; later on, some more spots were utilized like the spots around Road 27 of Dhanmondi, for the Universities like the University of Liberal Arts, State University of Bangladesh, Daffodil University, University of Asia Pacific, etc. The students from these Universities joined hands in the protest activities as a cohesive force for the cause. The coordination and planning of activities together was done quite a bit during the students' face-to-face meetings.

One of the leaders recalled that offline activism began once the students started to fume at the proposal of VAT on private university education. The students tried to drum up excitement and intensify the zeal for this movement by utilizing many creative pursuits like performing street dramas and skits, where most of the dialogue was impromptu (although many sequences were planned beforehand). These performances were meant to entertain and motivate the young audience who was actively participating in the activism campaign. These skits were created based on the shadow of *Heerok Rajar Deshe,* a classic Bengali film of Satyajit Ray's satire against state oppression. Ray was a popular Bengali motion-picture director, who also was a gifted illustrator and writer.

While students participated in offline activism based on this theme of *Heerok Rajar Deshe*, humorously adapted as "He Rock Rajar Deshe," each university came up with its own set of dialogue and adaptations based on the theme. During the first stages of offline activism, the students would start campaigning after 4 PM when their classes would get dismissed. But, during the more intense times of the movement, the students did not go to classes. While the campaigns were going on in front of the university campus premises, the professors stood beside the students to avoid any untoward situation or any political blunder during the students' activism. When the students went for offline activism away from the campus, then the teachers could not keep a watchful eye on the situation.

When one student leader from the dental college and hospital reflected on the offline activism on #NoVATonEducation, he said that most of the movements in Bangladesh during those times were based online, yet what happened offline alongside the online activism was worth mentioning:

The most interesting thing was once any road is blocked for a cause, people get to notice. When people suffer due to things like a road blockade, unfortunately, they sort of feel the urge to pay heed to the matter. Otherwise, if the activists would stand with a placard on #NoVATonEducation or #QuotaReform, maybe no one would ever notice. When a minister's route to destination is blocked, then the minister would notice what the matter is and ask what happened. Unfortunately, this is what it is being done in these cases which sometimes act as facilitators in reaching a breakthrough. It may be sad, but without this, there may be no way to bring any problems to everyone's cognizance. Here, this sort of offline activism was also quite effective in one sense that, although some people became a little perturbed due to these blockades yet many supported the movement.

One of these student leaders suggested concentrating more on the Dhanmondi area as the main hub for the offline activism in addition to the Mohakhali/Gulshan/Badda area, and explained why they chose not to affiliate this movement with the already popular area named Shahbag for activism purposes:

> We discounted the idea of going to Shahbag, yet concentrating in the activism around the Dhanmondi or Baridhara area where maximum of our private universities was located. Although we wanted to include the other areas of Bangladesh (like Chittagong or Sylhet) yet our campaign mainly became Dhaka-based. We sat with them a number of times for coordination meetings. On a regular basis, we kept on doing offline activities like forming human chains, and rallies, etc."

In arranging the movement, the leaders also arranged some co-curricular features:

> We also had done small-scale exhibitions and street-drama ('potho-natok'), too. No movement can come about without the charisma of songs. One of the student leaders made instantaneous unscripted RAP music while on the roads. We used the very famous songs that were the life-blood of many earlier movements of Bengali culture.

They used this particular song in the banners for this campaign, too. Songs of Putul Mukhopadhyay and Towfique and Faisal Roddy's "bidrohee" (the rebel) from 2014 album were also used.

The Leaders on Online Activism and Social Media. The leaders were asked why the #NoVATonEducation campaign played out successfully on social media. One of the student leader-activists pointed out about the audience-centered approach that was the key in bringing out the success in social media usage in this campaign:

The main reason I think is, the users of Facebook who were students at that time and they knew how to effectively use this medium. So the student- based audiences played a prime role in driving the #NoVATonEducation movement via social media. They knew it was the social media which was the most appropriate medium to choose in reaching out to so many people within such a short time. It was nearly impossible for any other medium to work as effectively as social media in disseminating the messages so easily and in such a short time. Whenever someone posted a message on this platform; everyone got to be aware of it in no time at all.

He also pointed out that Facebook was the main platform in this campaign. Twitter was not utilized as much as Facebook, since it was not "as versatile as the Facebook" at that time. YouTube was used mainly for video uploads and songs to drum up excitement for the movement. Although Instagram was used for photo posting by some, not as many students used that platform extensively. Communication via e-mails was not as common.

The researcher asked the student leaders what they thought about the role of social media in organizing the movement. They expressed how they used Facebook for mobilizing, organizing the campaign, and communicating to the stakeholders involved. While speaking about the facilitating role of online activism via Facebook, one of the student leaders elaborated:

Coming to what was the role of social media in this regard. There were around 50 private universities in Dhaka (at that time), and roughly there were situated largely in two areas (regions)—1) Dhanmondi, and 2) Banani & Baridhara. We actually tried to coordinate between the two regions. Due to the unfortunate traffic gridlock situations in the city of Dhaka, as well as the fact that different private universities had classes at different timings, it was more practical for us to coordinate via the social media, in fact, it was the

best place (platform) to reach out and keep everyone in the loop. We had opened a social

media page at that time as well as a Gmail (novatoneducation@gmail.com) account

particularly for that Facebook page opening purpose as well as liaising with the press

regarding the press briefings and photo sharing with the press, etc. Anyone could send

his/her write-up here, too! Another reason to bank on social media was, we kept in mind

the success of social media in the Shahbag movement, and therefore, we heavily relied on

this new media, too. However, we took care to come out of the way the Shahbag

movement was conducted. We actually wanted to decentralize the #NoVATonEducation

movement. Since this movement was not by any public Universities like the Dhaka

University, we had to take care in choosing a common platform that was ideal for

decentralization and not just based on any particular area of meeting like Shahbag.

Although there were a few mainstream media outlets that covered this movement at the

last stage of this campaign, the student leaders used Facebook (specially dedicated for this

movement for coordination and support purposes) in sharing the updates on what the mainstream

media covered on the issue. One of the student leaders recalled:

The activists compiled and shared the knowledge amongst themselves which the

mainstream media had published during 2010-2012 regarding the VAT and the

University Grant's Commission's stance on that issue. All these also were disseminated

via the Facebook. They shared these via the Facebook platform so that everybody could

keep abreast on the topic, and in terms of knowledge, everyone could be on the same

page regarding the issue.

The students changed their profile pictures based on the #NoVATonEducation theme.

Those profile pictures were changed to a yellow background with the "no vat" emblem written in

capital red letters. There was also a dedicated page for this campaign that was connected to the private university alliance. This was a combined effort of online activism by all the private universities.

In addition to face-to-face communication, much of the coordination of the joint movement was done via online correspondence. In this particular campaign, it was visual communication that took the lead rather than the text communication. According to one of the student leaders, since pictures were worth a thousand words, the activists wanted to convey and spread the messages quickly—mostly by visual communication. Visual communication grabbed the attention first rather than a plethora of text. Also, the availability of was a major factor in this campaign. The activists grabbed quick shots when they needed to convey the message quickly and spread it through social media.

In the early stages before the government seriously proclaimed their stance of applying VAT formally, the initiative that started with an informal announcement regarding the first intention of issuing VAT on education got canceled eventually. The student leader who heavily participated both online and offline commented about the timing:

At that time those who were against this decision posted online and at a later stage after about a year when the government became serious and a proposal was drafted for imminently on the agenda, only then the students also started the activism offline.

The students proactively made videos on #NoVATonEducation and shared them on social media.

According to one of the student leaders:

What was the most successful about this campaign was the online activism through which, the world got to know that something was happening in the education sector of

Bangladesh where the country's youth were trying to have the value-added tax repealed

from their education costs. For three days there was no response from the government's

side... so they took the initiative. I think this was a very successful campaign online and

offline as well. They did the offline activism throughout the day and they did the online

activism throughout the night. Whenever an activist shared an interesting thing, their

acquaintances or relatives then re-shared from them (online). The government may have

asked the mainstream media to use caution or apply filter when publishing news. With

social media, citizen journalism covered that aspect. Many of the students' parents as of

mine also encouraged to go for offline activism.

According to another of the student leader activists:

I think social media had played the main role here. First of all, everyone were centered

around their respective universities, later on when the movement became more

centralized, all the students got united, mainly from the point where the East-West

University students suffered bullet injuries. All the Universities then came together to

protested being united. If there weren't any social media, this movement would have

transpired alright, but would have taken much time to take place.

He also talked about their usage of posters, placards, and banners to display their grievances.

Talking about the evolution of placards, he said, "Nowadays the placards have rather turned into

Facebook posts and memes."

Social Media played a huge role in congregating the students and mobilizing the

movement. In addition to that, one of the leaders of the movement pointed out that the social

media acted as a vehicle of creating awareness by disseminating and updating the information as

to what was going on in the movement. Here, the mainstream media was not very helpful in disseminating the information or creating the awareness. He reflected:

> Social media was the only avenue that was available for the student activists to communicate to the general public about what was happening. With the help of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, the messages could quickly spread within and beyond Bangladesh.

Another student leader talked about merit of social media in a similar fashion as he reflected on the coordination of the different student activists and leaders in planning a huge congregation during the movement: "The students had coordinated this liaison with the other students of different Universities in Dhaka via the social media platforms like Facebook, which was economical. They also made phone calls to each other to coordinate the rally."

Since the Bangladeshis mostly use Facebook rather than Twitter, Facebook was the main platform. The posts and footage via Facebook went viral and enabled the youth of the country to unify and disseminate messages amongst themselves whereas Twitter was used to get the attention of the international media. One of these activist leaders expressed:

> Many made short videos on YouTube and cross-posted on Facebook. Some have used them for their personal blogs yet since many of the students in Bangladesh felt they were more at ease with using Facebook; they used that media to share any videos they found interesting there pertaining to the #NoVAT issues.

> Speaking about the offline activism, one of the leaders opined, "During the Shahbagh movement, I saw a status, 'How long on the keyboards only via the social media? Let's move to the streets!' Many of them (the activists) also thought 'why not?' and they got inspired by this status." This status went viral and ultimately had a snowballing effect. Here, social media also

played a part in gathering people offline in the Shahbagh movement. Here, the slacktivism prompted the offline activism. Regarding the reasons behind the all-out support, one of the participant student leaders opined:

> I think the closeness and warmth of camaraderie between the peers also was a factor to join the cause out of empathy and this is how the participation in this campaign/movement got bigger. And this possibly is a movement in which persons of every level had well accepted the grounds of it and thus, everyone wholeheartedly supported.

According to one of the leaders, "Here Facebook became the powerful tool of social media and a facilitator for communicating to the stakeholders, organizing the students for the movement, and for mobilizing the movement. Out of Dhaka, the scenario was a bit different. Dhaka based social media users use Facebook more often than that of the suburbs or the cities outside of Dhaka who were more inclined to enjoying video content than reading the texts or posts. For Dhaka based people, it was rather easier to access and connect online.

Other Aspects of the Campaign. According to this activist leader, the information that spread outside Bangladesh helped to make the government realize there was no use in letting this issue linger any further. Initially, there was an attempt from some of the public university students to create a divide between the private and the public university students. But, that attempt did not farewell.

The most significant message that one of the leaders could remember was regarding a meme: "My Dad is not an ATM Machine/ATM Booth." According to him, this message had also made a significant impact—as the students' realized they should be more respectful about their fathers' hard-earned money, and secondly, it was a message conveyed to the government as well,

which pointed out that, "... the government was taking VAT from other avenues, that may be okay, but education sector should be spared as it is an essential (right for the citizens of the country)."

Impediments in the Movement. When the researcher asked what hurdles or challenges they faced during this campaign and how they or the other students could overcome these challenges, the participants had many stories to tell. One of the student leaders, in the interview reminisced on the resistance from police once the students started to demonstrate soon after the proposition of the VAT:

> It was possibly the day after (one day after the students' first offline activism on the streets); the students from Daffodil University wanted to form a rally in the form of human chain in front of the Sangsad Bhavan (National Assembly/Parliament) from where they faced obstacles from the police. Police foiled the attempt to form the rally and arrested one of the students and took the student to the Sher-E-Bangla police station and detained him at the station for some time... about a couple of hours or so.

Once the students were busy with the activism during the movement, some of the professors (mainly the authority/university administration) of the private universities cautioned the students not to create any sort of instability or uproar on the university premises. One of the student leaders opined that the professors in the administrations' initial resistance were there to prevent the universities from facing any image crisis. Many professors, though with the students in the movement, warned them that the University authorities might coerce the students to do something once they will be pressurized by the government to take any particular stance. For this reason, their professors forbade them to attend any offline activism in front of the university. They even did not let them loiter around the university premises in groups.

In the initial stages of the movement, the police did not let the students stand in queue on the footpaths (sidewalks). During those times, the professors made the students remain inside the campus buildings. The police prevented student congregation in front of the campus. When the students blocked the roads, the sergeant of police would come and stand there giving an implication that he was not doing anything yet was watching the students. Mostly the students protested peacefully yet these forces were still there lest the things went out of control.

The student leaders said their universities were initially unsupportive. According to them, they were initially discouraged to take part in such a movement. Starting from June to September, they perceived that many things had changed and the university administration had to adjust accordingly. The student leaders claimed that their university Vice Chancellor made a statement once the movement reached its peak. In the meantime, there was a massive protest rally attended by more than 500-700 students from different universities in Dhaka, who started marching towards the Banga bhavan, the residence of the country's president to present him with a memorandum regarding their demands. The event was named "March to President" and the plan was to demonstrate with a protest march from the Press Club to the residence of the president. Their rally was foiled somewhere in between.

One of the student leaders faced a different kind of hurdle than the rest while organizing the movement. During the movement, the camera he used malfunctioned and the sound didn't record. This technical breakdown could be salvaged since he used a backup audio device so he could use the sound clip for the campaign.

Leaders' Contribution. The leaders recalled their individual and collective contributions to the movement in 2015. One of the leaders explained,

We conceived 'VAT-Birodhi Shikkharthi Oikko' as the name of the platform, yet the name was too long, was not catchy enough and also was not inclusive enough as there were English medium schools that also had to be regarded in scope of association/lobby group/pressure group against the value-added tax imposition. Although VAT was levied against English medium schools since earlier times, nonetheless, none had spoken against it. Also, as private universities never allowed student politics, yet there was a need for a platform to speak against the value-added tax directive. We wanted to have a common platform that would be inclusive of all. Owing to these reasons, the name "no vat on education" came up that conveyed the message that this was the platform against all kinds of value-added tax on education. Simply said, the platform will be against any kind of imposition of value-added taxes on education.

Some students of the University of Liberal Arts coined the term for this platform while discussing about the movement during tea-breaks in the cafés, and the name was accepted by all. Thus, the name of this movement became #NoVATonEducation.

Some interest groups wanted to establish their names as the title of the movement, yet the students did not allow that to happen. They wanted the title of the platform to be all-inclusive for interest groups who had the similar demands of no-value added tax. The students wanted the name of this association to be inclusive enough so that it could be accommodated through the scope that conveyed the motto and could be taken to a greater platform in the same domain. One of the ULAB student's houses at road 7/A named Mistri Bari was the hub where they had a high-end computer to design the logo of the movement. This emblem was used throughout the campaign for posters, profile pictures, and Facebook page.

According to the one of the interview participants, the background color yellow was chosen due to a myth that had been established in the country regarding the private university students. The students are called "Farm Chicken" ("Farm'erMurgi" in Bengali), which is part myth and part reality. As one the interview participants revealed, they chose Himu, a popular fictional character of noted novelist, dramatist, and screenwriter Humayun Ahmed. Himu appeared to be living like a vagabond or a gypsy wearing Yellow Punjabi, eccentric and unorthodox in outlook, often speaking indifferently about the unpleasant truth, and this campaign often involved of long periods of walking. The red color was used to due to the color's connection with the rebellion movements. Yellow, the color of Himu, also conveyed a rebellious personality type, according to Bangladeshi popular culture.

Another student leader activist who was also a rapper remembered about his composing a rap song in the native language Bengali portraying the realities of the private university students' struggle. On his personal contribution in this movement, he recollected:

My contribution was that I have tried my best with the songs that I had sung and the public speeches that I made to motivate the student activists in the movement; the outcome of which was, VAT was not imposed on private university education. This was not for my own or even no one else's personal gain. Our main goal was to scrap the VAT (on private university education expenses), and I was one of the students who took the lead.

The student leader who trained the activists in different social media strategies humbly spoke about his contribution:

I don't feel that I have any achievement in the movement; the credit goes to those who had protested and those who had initiated the movement. It is their success, and I think it

is the success of the Bangladeshi youth. Not only the youth but also their parents who had

supported the cause. They had their backing and the courage. And the teachers who

supported it. My personal contribution was the technical support in guiding how to

engage the international media via the Twitter, engage my institution in it, and engaging

my personal acquaintances whom I had taught how to use the hashtag in keying a

particular message to get more attention so that if everyone does it jointly; it will generate

more positive effects.

The Crucial Tools for the Campaign. The students listed the following tools when asked

which tools they considered crucial:

- Poster/Banner in the initial stage of the campaign

- Road march was a crucial activity. (For example, the student rally marched from the road
  7 to road 27 of Dhanmondi area)

- Skit, song, and sharing of the student activists' experiences after that stage.

- Facebook platform for updating the audience what had been going on in the streets, on a
  real-time basis.

- Videos and photos

- Memes—at that time, some cartoonists started to share cartoons. Some of the cartoonists
  were professionals and the others were the students who used to draw well. The
  professional cartoonists who participated in sharing the contents indulged in this creative
  pursuit proactively. The memes were interesting and funny, with the purpose of
  disseminating messages in a memorable and humorous way. Also, according to that
  student leader activist, when a meme went viral, it gained much more attention and

people tried to find the meaning behind it, as he said, "In trying to find the meanings, people get the original message that was intended through this meme."

When the researcher asked what media tools amplified this social campaign, at what point of time, and why, the leaders mostly talked about the importance of visual images. According to one the student leader activists, the pictures and videos that went viral were the "No Vat on Education" emblem with red letters on a yellow background, the pictures of the police attack, the student injury from the police attack, and the pictures of bullets found inside the East-West University. Some of the video clips during the police attacks on students that the activists captured were the most critical. They also went to the extent of using the emblem so there would not be any confusion regarding the message and from where it was coming from.

Group: University Administrator/Professor

Professors/Administrators in the Sample. The university professors and administrators of different private universities in Dhaka were approached to gain the perspective of these important stakeholders regarding the issue of value-added taxes and the subsequent withdrawal following the #NoVATonEducation campaign.

The researcher interviewed six private university faculty members in total from four institutions—The University of Asia Pacific, BRAC University, The University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, and United International University Bangladesh. Among the six participants in this group, three were professors, two were associate professors, and one of them was an assistant professor. Four of these participants either assumed administrative roles (e.g., heads of the departments, program chairs, registrars, and deans) during the #NoVATonEducation campaign in 2015, or had administrative responsibilities during the time the interview was conducted. The faculty members/administrators were chosen based on their university's active participation in

the movement in Dhanmondi and Mohakhali region, their position in the administration at that time, and their participation in activism offline as well as on social media.

Faculty Members'/Administrators'/Students' Stance and Initial Reactions. The faculty member participants were asked about their stance on the VAT issue. They were also asked to share what they remembered about the initial reactions of the professors, the administrators, and the students to the newly imposed value-added-tax. The interviewees reported mixed reactions and mostly indicated a state of confusion regarding the value-added-taxes once it was suddenly proposed.

Most of the administrative and the faculty members interviewed kept out of the active participation offline except one assistant professor who was not associated with the administration. She reflected on her participation with the students/other activists, "I was then working at Northern University Bangladesh and I remember forming human chain near the Satmosjid along with 22 of my fellow colleagues protesting the Government decree."

One of the professors from the University of Asia Pacific in Dhanmondi reflected:

Although the teachers were almost unanimous in their criticism of the new VAT, their opinion was divided on the students' movement. While many supported it because they felt the government wouldn't agree otherwise, many others were upset that students were missing classes and even exams as part of the 'movement.'…

The VAT issue gave rise to further confusion regarding who would be shouldering the responsibility of paying the extra cost on private university tuition as the professor also pointed out:

Some teachers also believed it was the moral responsibility of universities to take up the issue with the government and ask students to return to their classes, while some believed

that universities should take some financial burden of the students by agreeing to pay at least part of the VAT (if not the entire VAT).

Another respondent from the American University who was an associate professor recollected that basically the government's plan was that the imposition of new VAT would fall on the university authorities. In many instances, however, some universities, like the one he used to work for, framed it otherwise. The university situated in Dhaka's Banani area, projected that the VAT was to be paid by the students. This is how they framed it, despite the fact that they also knew that the VAT actually was supposed to be paid by the university. Regarding this stance of his workplace and many other private universities, he commented,

> Now, why did they take that position (stance)? It's actually, if they could successfully propagate this kind of view that, it is on the students; it would be construed as the 'holy' responsibility of the students to actually protest… Whereas, the moment they (the University authority) would agree to pay the VAT themselves; the students would not have joined any movements against the imposition of VAT. So, they successfully could make the students negatively motivated, in their stance in taking them to the streets and protest; ensuring the University's all sorts of support.

During that time, some universities, like his workplace, were notorious in suppressing any kinds of student movements against them. In that particular case, they kept supporting the movement and directed the faculty members to postpone students' scheduled exams by asking not to become any hindrance towards this cause as the students were already in the streets. Reflecting on this set-up he recalled, "I saw how a lot of adjustments were made internally to support the students' cause to support this movement. The university authority was very happy that the students blocked the roads in protest against the VAT imposition."

Many of the faculty participants reflected that they and their coworkers in that university, however, were in favor of the government's decision since they thought that the universities ought to pay VAT. One of the faculty member participants realized they were deceived by the university authorities as they had grievances regarding the university's depriving them off their recompense in many different cases (e.g., deception with gratuity, delay in paying the provident fund and other dues in the plea of various conditions, work without remuneration, unnecessary red-tape bureaucratic hindrance, etc.). Therefore, many of the professors wanted the government to go after those corrupt and unprincipled private universities.

Another twisted and complicated argument concerned many university campuses, which became a source of confusion. This was regarding the provision, an essential condition for the payment of VAT. One of the participants elaborated on this:

> If one purchases a commodity, like a shirt, s/he pays VAT. If students were the buyers, in commercial perspective, one could argue that they were buying education, and therefore, it was the students who needed to pay the VAT, that was the argument of the university authorities. The government's argument was the universities were earning profit by selling education, whereas, the education should not be a commodity for earning profit, and therefore, it was the university authorities, who should be responsible for paying VAT, just like any other commercial entities as the government's argument was, these education institutions were profiteering which they should not be doing.

Here was a hole in the argument upon which the tenet was established. As one of the participants pointed out, "As a whole, there was an anomaly in the understanding of the logic behind VAT imposition and the party who would actually be the payer of the value-added-taxes on private

university education."Banking on this confusion, some of the universities took advantage of the situation at the expense of their students, as the participant also explained:

In view of all these, the university authorities, because of their own selfish reasons were trying their best that the student movement regarding VAT pays off in success which ultimately would save them from paying that (amount) to the government.

Regarding the students' reaction, one of the participants, who was formerly teaching in the American University, remembered:

Now the students' reaction was, they at one stage realized that it was fundamentally the University's responsibility to pay the VAT, but if they did not mobilize the movement against the government directive of value-added tax payment, it would ultimately be churned out from the students through the raise of tuitions.

This realization made them buckle-up for a greater cohesion and assemble for a greater call for action. The universities took advantage of the student movement, which could save them from paying the extra taxes to the government. Students knew that ultimately it was them who would have to stop this imposition of taxes on their tuition fees. Nonetheless, they had to give in to this exploitation. The university authority exploited this situation of naivety of the students.

One of the associate professor participants from United International University spoke about the state of confusion. He reflected by saying that as teachers, first of all, they were surprised, since the VAT was supposed to be levied on commercial products or services and education was still technically considered a philanthropic project. On this tenet, he put forward:

Now, when these things are funded by the private entrepreneurs, that's where the question comes like should we impose VAT on private universities or not? Now, you see, most of the private universities are funded by the foundations as legal entities, which are formed

by philanthropists, social workers or social entrepreneurs! Now, there was a big question like, were they earning profit at the end of the day? If so, should the government charge, i.e., impose VAT on the services of the Universities. That was the big question.

One of the interviewees who, at the time of the movement, was the director of a private university's bachelor program, reflected on his experience as an administrator during the movement:

> From the Administrative point of view, we were a little bit surprised and a little bit apprehensive about what will be the consequences after putting VAT. The government was (not rightly) framing that as a service in the sense that it (actually) was for social purpose…But the thing is, if you look at the Private University Act, it says that the surplus from the University cannot be taken beyond the scope of the University. So, you need to invest back in the academic program; you need to invest back in the infrastructure development and things like that. So, if the law says things like that, how could you impose VAT? That was the first, the initial reaction from our part.

He thought it was clearly communicated from different administrative positions in different private universities.

According to this administrative faculty member participant, the understanding between the professors and the students at that time, "…was sort of an informal backing up each other… the big morale boost that made them go out and reach (out) the common mass."Speaking further about the student-professor morally backing up each other, he further expressed by clarifying how the students interpreted the faculty members' and the administration's stance regarding the movement:

The students could guess what we were thinking... our students knew, that (their) teachers

or administrators were not opposing, that VAT should not be on education…They knew

that these people, from their mind and their souls were backing this movement…we got

the vibe from their interaction via the social media that they knew that the teachers were

with them. Most of the influential teachers on Facebook, they were active, giving statuses

like, "we are not in favor (of VAT), and things like that."…that sort of acted like a moral

support.

Mostly, the participants let the researcher know about their administrative dilemmas by

saying, "Although, we as administrators, being in our positions cannot get involved in this sort of

movement."Another participant talked about the administrative dilemmas they had to go

through:

Maybe individually some teachers supported the students. But the University

administration, as far as I know, kept out of it. I mean we didn't organize student

movements, or guide the students into it; we kept out of it primarily because we had to!

As this is not our business; this is student affairs. We didn't go and encourage the students

to do some illegal activities. Most of us were on the same page, nobody... nobody

accepted the government's move to pay VAT.

A similar stance was reiterated by most of the administrative faculty members in the sample.

For professors and administrators, the professor from United University said:

Initially our reaction was mixed, and you can say, more negative actually, since education

is no more a commodity, like the other commodities in the market. If I define the

education in that way, that is actually undermining that status of education in the

perception of the people. That is why you can say it was a mixed reaction, which was

mostly negative, not only from the students but also from the teachers and the university administrators as well.

The professor at the University of Liberal Arts who was also in the administration contrasted the public university facilities with that of the private universities and how the public universities were enjoying more privileges. He mentioned the private university students when paying 6-8 lacs (600,000 – 800,000 Taka/near about 7,000 to 9,500 US dollars) over the 4 years (of undergraduate education), and on top of that 7.5% was construed by many as a "ridiculous expense." When evaluating these two types of Universities he explained, "Contrastingly, the public University fees are a paltry sum (18 Bangladeshi Takas/month), which doesn't even cover the cost of the pen which is used to give a receipt."He mentioned how the students were outraged and went against the VAT as a result. The professor also mentioned how he and his colleagues were not happy about the situation altogether:

> And we were unhappy because we thought if we... we are not going to absorb that in our offices because that will reduce our surpluses and we don't want to increase our school fees i.e., University fees because that means that there'll be hardship that; our admissions will go down; our prices will go up... we were very unhappy! And the administration again, we were unhappy because we thought it was the most unjust because no other country in this world had VAT on university fees that I know of! … This is a national investment; investment in education. Why would you tax them; tax it later when they graduate and start working.

Many of the university participants also fretted over student recruitment if the VAT would be imposed on education. The main reason for confusion was that the VAT used to be

imposed on commodities and profit-making organizations, whereas universities were non-profit institutions.

Why Professors Thought Students Protested. The interviewees realized that the students already surmised that university authorities would eventually shift the tax burden on their students' shoulders one way or the other, and thus they commented on their understanding of the scenario. One of the professors in the interview sample thus remarked:

> As the students were almost sure that the universities would eventually shift the financial burden on them, while it was still affordable for some students (and their relatively well-off families), a large number of students were worried that their middle- or low-income families would find it impossible to withstand this additional financial burden.

Many of the faculty members in the sample reflected about the government's flawed hypothesis regarding the demographics (income level) of the private university students' families. They pointed out that the government thought that private university students could be a good source of revenue. This is how one of the faculty members clarified what was the flaw in the hypothesis:"The government's point of view was that all the students who study in the private universities, all of them are from the rich families. They had used these types of generalizations."

> Another participant opined:

> There's a myth that the students of private universities are rich kids; they are not... this is a HUGE mistake (by the government)... they are from very ordinary backgrounds! Sometimes the students actually drop a semester because their parents don't have money to pay for their term. And in this, their parents are selling lands, and doing this for this investment.

Regarding the students' stance as to why they campaigned for the cause of the imposition of value-added-taxes on their education, one of the faculty members interviewed reflected, "Students, however, all across the country protested and were completely against the idea that a public basic utility like education should be taxed."Most of the faculty and administrative participants of the universities pointed out the emotional as well as financial reasons for the students erupting with all-out protests.

Talking about the infrastructural gap regarding the Bangladesh government's tertiary education facilities, one of the participants reflected on the role of private universities in filling the gap:

> The government facilities or government infrastructure in terms of accommodating the high school-pass students that we call HSC, still (was) very limited and a huge number of students used to go abroad—in India, Australia, or USA, etc. So, that is why, in order to fulfill that gap, the private university concept emerged in Bangladesh.

Some of the faculty member participants also expressed their frustrations with the stereotypical attitude regarding the private universities to be one of the causes for this eruption. One of them argued:

> From the government's point of view, or (from the) other parts of the society, (in terms of the status) the private universities did not get proper respect, that proper attention that they were contributing to the society, and to the economy! From that point of view, they (the government) labeled the group of private university students, as rich, they were not contributing (enough); they were spending so much money, etc. And after treating the education as a commodity, all these things created a huge anger among the students.

Another of the participants opined that the students also thought that the government was not treating them equally with their counterparts of the public universities.

The participants elaborated further on how the private universities where stereotypically treated:

Even as a teacher, I did not like the way the government approached and labeled the private universities. Even in the newspapers, you (can) see some kind of segregation by labeling private universities, (setting them) apart from the other public universities! It seemed private universities were not in any of their agenda or any kind of thing. Therefore, altogether it created a kind of dissatisfaction among the (private university) students.

Another of the faculty member participants opined:

The press, the mainstream media, everybody talked about the private university students in disparaging terms, "Farm er Murgi!" (Farm Chickens), right? Hmm... They are all children of rich parents... they're not gonna go to the streets about anything, they are always thinking about themselves; about their petty little things! — (All) that kind of changed! I think they (these students) also had a point to prove!

According to the program directors, the reasons the students had joined the movement was due to the students' apprehension that ultimately the extra burden would be shifted to them and thus, their organized movement in that respect:

They feared that ultimately it is them who would have to bear that cost. On top of that, there was a sort of organized movement because what was happening on the social media had an offline background also (about what was happening offline). There was like a Private University Students' Association, who opposed the VAT.

Many attributed a second reason for the students' joining the movement, which was the accessibility of a social media platform.

One of the faculty member participants commented:

The students willingly joined the movement in order to ward off or stall a possible blow of extra tariff on their education. Actually, it was the university authorities who should have protested against the burden of taxes yet it was the students who had to take the initiative.

He also remembered that, during that time, neither the Finance Minister nor the Ministry clarified who would pay for this. After some time, they clarified who would be responsible for paying the VAT, as they made it clear that it was the university as an institution would pay it. Before that, the students and the University were confused as to who will be shouldering the VAT responsibility. According to him:

This (the confusion regarding the VAT responsibility) made the students infuriated as they assumed that their wallets were going to be taxed. The University authorities took this chance, and the students fell a victim to this, and knowing full well about the reality (that they were being used) yet they played by going to the field. I liaised closely with the students, so I could tell about their situation and their perspective.

The Faculty's Perspective had the VAT been Imposed. The professors and administrators in the interview sample shared what they thought the scenario would have been if the VAT would have been imposed on the students' fees. According to one participant professor's opinion, the universities would have eventually shifted the tax load on the students' shoulders as he commented and surmised about a concerning situation.

Another faculty member participant opined on the concern of students as he remembered about their fear that the VAT would be imposed:

The students were angry in general, both at the government's decision and knowing that universities would eventually shift the financial burden on them. In addition, a large number of students wondered how their middle- or low-income families would withstand this additional financial burden.

Even the University Administrators agreed on their students' conjecture as one of them who was a Dean of the Business School admitted how the added cost would have been sourced from if the VAT ultimately would have been imposed:

With our university, we would have just passed it to our students, since that is what VAT means, you pass it on to the final consumer but we were also pressured. There was, also indirect, unofficial pressure from the government, trying to force us to absorb the VAT, which is something you don't hear everywhere.

Another faculty member also reiterated a similar stance:

The university authorities would not shoulder this added burden but would shift it to the students and get that from them. As we have seen, the universities, while they plan on moving to a new campus, they charge in the account of "development fees," I believe, they would have done so, too if the VAT would have been imposed.

An associate professor as well as the director of the School of Business told the researcher that the universities were less concerned initially about where the tax amount would be financed from. Legally, this was supposed to be passed on back to the students. According to him, the university had to decide on how this amount was to be paid, which was a point of confusion for all parties involved. The dilemma was if it would be paid from their surplus or if it

would be imposed on the students. From the university's perspective, they had the added issue of putting VAT on education, which was in line with the common rise of fees. On that predicament, he explained:

> Here's the tricky part. If you pay from your surplus, by raising the fees because we are taking a surplus from our share in paying the VAT, now there might be an influence on your student intake. Or, if you pass it on to your students, the student enrollment might get hurt. So it's a kind of a limbo, in which way you should go!

The participant also illustrated that there were concerns regarding stories of other universities sourcing the fees from their surpluses, which they possibly could not hold on to. And that this, on the other hand, was more of a concern from the students' points of views.

Another professor in the interview sample, who was also at the helm of his university's administration at the time of the movement, reflected how the government tried to protect itself from culpability, the university administration's stance on the government's directive, and the students' obvious reaction on the situation:

> At that time, the government tried to defend its position that the VAT had been charged over the organizations only; not on the students. The paradox is that, since it's a private organization, where from the private organization would manage the money? Definitely, from directly or indirectly it will charge it over the students. This is the reason for the students' reservations and their anger seethed because they knew that the government was telling that "We're not taking the VAT from you; the University authority will say, we're not charging any VAT on you, but the University has some other…so many avenues to collect it from the students, in disguise."That is why student instant reaction was so negative.

He further clarified the confusion regarding when the government announced its tentative plans of value-added tax:

When the VAT imposition was declared, they (the government) did not mention (clarify) to whom they are going to impose (the VAT). They only had said (that) the private education (institutions) must pay VAT. That's why when there was any negative reaction, then they tried to say in such a way that they were not going to charge the VAT over the students; they were going to charge it over the organization. So (according to the Government's version) the students' (education) cost will not be escalated, their cost shall not be increased. But the scenario was that, people knew what will happen at the end of the day.

How Students Took Part in Activism. The faculty and the administrator participants for this study recalled how their students in their respective universities took part in online and offline activism. One of the faculty members vividly remembered how offline activism occurred on campus yet was not able to fully follow how the students conducted online activism:"I am not fully aware of their 'internal' mode of communication, but am quite sure that 'Online' communication must have played an important role for this 'Facebook generation'..."He, however, clearly remembered how offline activism took place and talked about the students' initial listless state on the VAT imposition, which ultimately led to the police firing on the students:

Students of University of Asia Pacific (UAP) didn't join the movement initially and had almost resigned to the "fate" that the VAT would be eventually imposed on them. In addition, they worried more about their ongoing semester final examinations. But, most of them joined the movement after police opened fire on a protest rally by the students of

another university. Subsequently, UAP students boycotted their semester final examinations and participated in the road blockades (along with students of other private universities), which almost paralyzed the entire capital city.

A faculty member participant who used to work for a different private university in Dhaka during the movement talked about offline and online student activism she witnessed in the Northern University at Dhaka:

Students of my university protested by forming human chain at prime location of the cities, (they) wrote extensively on social media against the decision and many even created their own videos and uploaded them at popular sites amassing the opinions as to how they totally boycotted the decision.

When trying to recall the online activities of their students, the professor participant from the University of Liberal Arts shared how he/she used social media and recollected how some of the students became apprehensive about their posts:

It was mainly sums, WhatsApp, Viber, having Facebook as the main platform, and Twitter to some extent with posts using the hashtag. There was huge! I mean, some of it might have been taken down because they (the student activists) were scared that the government would come after them. They have used YouTube. There were a lot of cross postings.

He reflected on how offline activism created a new dimension that the country had never experienced before. It was an unprecedented form of peaceful protest. He explained:

Initially very measured... There were human chains, posters, standing along this campus road, but then as the government sort of started talking tough and threatening students, (that) they'll (the government) take action... then it escalated to an amazingly peaceful

movement, they (the students) just took over the junctions. They just sat down on the floor, they brought the whole transportation system of Dhaka to a standstill... without any violence, no cars were broken, no windows broken or windshields were smashed, nobody was harassed, very peaceful (while) singing and dancing, they just sat down and brought the whole Dhaka city to a standstill!

Regarding online activism of his students, he recollected how social drove the campaign and how the mainstream media later followed. He had a strong relationship with his students, and could follow and vividly describe what their social media posts were like. Regarding his students' offline activism, he remembered:

They actually blocked the roads. Not only our university, I would say, all the universities in Dhaka city, they categorically divided their responsibility of blocking the roads in their vicinity, and created massive traffic jam by stalling the traffic movement throughout the city, and when so many university students took to the streets altogether at the same time, it was pretty difficult for the government to go for any hard line of action.

He also reflected on how his students could mobilize their offline activism via online platforms*:*

The entire system of coordination of offline activism was successfully materialized because of Facebook platform's huge role of managing—mainly through the Facebook messenger and Facebook page. The Facebook page on this movement was quite an instrument in mobilization and action since it was accessible by all the activists and they could keep a watch, comment, and discuss among themselves. Internally, the students liaised with each-other via the Facebook messenger in the nationwide Facebook page solely opened for this cause.

He also reflected why it was mainly Facebook that the students chose over Twitter or any other

platforms:

> To be very honest, Twitter in Bangladesh was not as popular (as Facebook) as now it is
>
> since a couple of years. The Twitter only became popular in Bangladesh when the cricket
>
> followers started to follow the cricketers' tweets and also after seeing the current US
>
> President tweet so much, many opened Twitter account out of curiosity.

The associate professor participant, who was also the director of one of the popular

programs of the university, reflected how offline activism in the movement that his students had

coordinated which he observed was uniquely and peacefully organized:

> Maybe a couple of thousands that had arrived early but since we were on the new
>
> campus, the police were not on that side, (thus) probably they forgot to track us… track
>
> our students. This campus just started at that time, it was a new campus. The offline
>
> activism was started in this campus. They expressed their solidarity with the platform like
>
> the Private University Students' Association, they were here and I found them really
>
> disciplined!

He illustrated this further by saying how the protesters were disciplined, unlike the

country's political culture:

> They were not breaking anything; they were not approaching the roads, or stopping
>
> traffic. And I found it really amazing that people can be (disciplined), when our
>
> mainstream leaders like go for unruly activities (in their campaigns) like breaking glass
>
> windows, and everything, I mean they (the youngsters) are really quiet clan but very firm
>
> on their demands. And many of the students actually were on Facebook live, like 'we are
>
> moving forward, join us!' and maybe during that trail, towards where they were going,

many passers-by including the students' of other universities joined; They made it sure

that the events that they own, the degree, the intensity also goes up because of the real-

time interaction, the real-time connection that you can do with your fellow thinkers!

The participant also narrated how social media factored in from the police action while

the students were demonstrating:

Social media gave a kind of boost, as you can come live and share any real-time updates

you want the others to know. (At) some time, I also believe there was some police action

in the Banani area, firing rubber bullets and stuff in some areas, East-West (University)

maybe, yeah! That actually aggravated the (whole) situation, that made the people angry

and I think it also became viral and enforced the power of the students even more. Like

they were sharing how police were beating and taking action, and that aggravated the

situation actually.

Social Activism Creates a New Dimension through the Social Media. The participants

were asked if they felt that social activism created a new dimension with the help of social media

in making novel changes. One of the professor participants opined:

I certainly do feel so. In Bangladesh, students of past generation(s) had played leading

roles in shaping social movements like the Language Movement (1952), War of

Independence (1971), and Mass Uprising and Democracy Movement (1990). On the

other hand, today's digital generation has often been blamed for its career-oriented

outlook, lack of emotion and patriotism, until they were able to speak their minds through

the social media. In fact, I believe they were won over by the slogan "Digital

Bangladesh" in the parliamentary elections of 2008. The No-VAT movement (2015) was

only part of their process to grow up in Bangladesh, through successive other important

social movements like Demand for Trial of War Criminals (2013), Quota-Reform

Movement (2018), and Road-Safety Movement (2018).

Speaking on how drastically different this particular movement was with social media

than that of the other movements of the past, he said:

The way they conducted the movements was also different from earlier generations (like

ours) who used to hate successive governments and law-enforcing agencies (like the

police and army). While earlier generations used to counter police-firings by stones and

brickbats, the 'No-VAT movement' saw the police allowing 'peaceful' road-blocks as

students handed them flowers. Also while the intellectuals used to write newspaper

articles to support social movements of earlier generations, they now appear on

Facebook, Twitter, Viber, WhatsApp and TV Talk-Shows. I also remember the students

(in their road-blockade) were also seen taking group-selfies as well as individual selfies

with police officers.

Another respondent agreed as she also reflected on the success of social media in

facilitating this fairly recent advocacy campaign:

I do believe social activism had found a new dimension with the help of social media in

making novel changes by drawing on the past few issues… Social media were then the

most popular way of voicing opinion due to its convenience and non-confrontation

nature. Social media then created strong impact on people's minds and even till date it

has grown even more popular and gained trust among its users as a reliable source of

information even at times, more than the print or other media.

She then attributed the same merit in the case of the #NoVAT movement as well by saying, "The

same took place with the VAT on education movement. Protest poured in on all forms of social

media from all across the society, in a quiet way, requesting the government to rethink the decision."

A professor of United University outlined how the activism found a new dimension via the social media as he expressed by comparing how using the social media had proved beneficial than the traditional campaigns:

Previously, meeting on the roads with the traditional system, created (many types of) barricades like additional traffic jam, but with the social media, one can communicate very easily. Another point is— it is less costly and less damaging to the property as well. It, however, has one problem. If the authorities stopped the internet in the country, or even (in the) locality, this system may not work properly. Another problem is that, some kinds of devices are needed to make this communication more effective. If the devices and other things are (quite) alright, then it is worth doing. In order to create social opinion or social awareness, I find this as an excellent tool. They are making good use of the availability internet, the gadgets, the apps, and the social media to disseminate any kind information regarding an activism, make protests, or put forward an idea, ask for patronization; whatever you say, it is very much possible!

The participants commented that this movement was different from the other kinds of movements by saying that this protest was a peaceful one. One of the professors, when speaking positively about his university students, enthusiastically exclaimed:

They realized that, you know, in making a change, we can have an effective protest, without using violence which had unfortunately had become a de facto standard here!— You want to make a protest; you break some wind shields, you set fire to a bus, you terrorize basically people and police here. I am so happy that has happened in a way that

also shows that the traditional avenues of democracy in Bangladesh are very limited since

we have a dysfunctional parliament because we have no effective opposition party and

the party in power having accountability is not very effective.

Speaking about the government's Digital Security Act, he opined that even the fear of this

legislation did not stop the students from advocating for their rights:

I mean apart from the print media and TV; even there the government is trying to bring in

these scary laws, like the Digital Security Act, and the other acts which kind of loosely

define fake news, and they can put you in jail within an hour! Somebody complains about

someone else and the police just come in and arrest (that person). So in that manner, how

do you control these individual students? Because, there are so many of them! How do

you control that? Although they are becoming savvy, about what they use and say, so in

future you will see they will be becoming more savvy, in terms of how they use the social

media, how not to lay themselves open to arrests or something else.

Talking more about the uniqueness of the movement, he pointed out the unprecedented

leap forward the students took:

Particularly, looking at the history, traditionally and historically you see, most of the

student movements have been led by the public universities, of course, there wasn't any

private university there (at that time). This of course (was) a very different one. Even

they thought, hey, my goodness! And this was the first time where on an issue, many

Universities came together. I can't think of any issues that which brought down... we have

many issues; can you think of any issues that united all the public universities together? I

can't! But this was the first issue which united all private universities—A very unique

movement!

An Associate Professor pointed out the social media's coming into the picture while the mainstream media fails to highlight the importance of a crucial occurrence. He said:

You have to understand that our media—our mainstream media, even though you had more newspapers, more TV channels and everything… that there is a perception like in the developing country like ours, the media is actually not so free as it is in the Western counterparts. Now, when you are silencing or not letting the media say what the true picture is, (automatically) the alternative media will be there, and that's how the social media played its role in our context.

When speaking about the role of social media acting as citizen journalism, one of the faculty members commented:

The NoVAT movement can be construed as one of the originator movements via the social media where a desired change could be possible on a massive scale. I believe in Bangladesh, Facebook is (a) really very powerful (tool) in terms of interactivity and scope of re-sharing content. This is a boon of this powerful platform for Bangladesh. However, there are some negative sides, too in terms of exaggeration and spread of rumor. But, anyway, this is how the novel changes come.

Before the advent of social media, many people did not have a platform to voice their opinion. Because of social media, now they do.

Speaking about the advantage of the social media, he reflected:

With the social media, the perpetrators are scared due to the fear of leakage of their secrecy. Anyone can grab a camera or capture a screenshot to flash things on the social media. Facebook is more real-time than the YouTube because YouTube is not as instant

as Facebook. YouTube videos need time to process like uploading and video editing.

Therefore, cannot be published instantly, and are processed later.

Interviewees' Opinions on the Government's Response. Many participants shared

multiple reasons that they thought were responsible for the government's backing off from its

initial stance. One of the university professors opined that there were not any alternatives left for

the government other than accepting the students' demands:

> I think the government had no other choice once the students took to the streets and
>
> almost blocked the entire capital city. I also felt the government itself was divided in its
>
> viewpoint to impose VAT on higher education. While it was the Finance Minister's idea
>
> to 'Poke finger' (in his words) at possible new areas of Tax-collection, many government
>
> officials (even cabinet ministers) used his often-used term 'Rubbish' to point at his
>
> 'senile' approach; many termed his 'poking finger' at the entire "Digital generation" (and
>
> their families) for 7.5% VAT on higher education not worth pursuing.

Another participant had a different view as the reason behind the government's agreeing

to withdraw, as the participant rationalized that the government of Bangladesh had two concerns:

> The government finally gave up with the decision by considering two main issues at
>
> hand. Firstly, there was strong protest from the general public from all the sections of the
>
> society who found it absolutely ridiculous that education is an amenity to be taxed on.
>
> Secondly, the court itself decreed that VAT on education is illegal and a violation to the
>
> constitution of Bangladesh, which states that it was the government's duty to ensure
>
> education and equal opportunity for all.

Regarding the government finally relenting to student demand, one of the professors

talked about the multidimensional concerns in the issue:

"Actually you know, multidimensional stakeholders were involved in that issue—(the

private university) students directly, the parents of the students, not only the government

side of the student wing, they had a different opinion and they did not agree with the

government's decision at that time, and above all, in the society, there is a common

perception—education is no more a commodity.

The participant also mentioned the struggling middle and lower middle classes, who were

sent their children to private universities when their children were denied admission to the

cheaper public universities. The hypothesis that everybody who sent their children to private

universities was rich was flawed. They would not be able to afford the price. He thus opined:

Overall, this approach was not that much ethical from the middle-income stakeholders'

points of view. One or two years later, a public election was scheduled, and for that

reason, the government also did not want to create any sort of tension in the country.

The protests came from every sector in every part of the society, and therefore the government

realized it made a poor decision.

A professor and administrator in a private university believed that the government was

seeking different avenues for tax collection and private universities were one such sector with

promising prospects:"Universities here have robust cash flow. For four years—fees from a

student could be a viable option. Banking on this logic, private universities were seen as a source

of cash; therefore, the government thought they should tap it."The participant also bluntly said:

Because the Government I think at one point wanted money as it was very bad in revenue

collection. So for various reasons, they were desperate to scanning who to tap…But now

with this movement, they antagonized the young people, these young people were future

voters! They antagonized their parents, they will have to fore cut more money; they

antagonized the teachers, and next the university administration, so they antagonized the

general public whose sympathies were with the students—they antagonized

EVERYBODY."

The government's hypothesis was also flawed in this regard as the professors' and

administrators' response to the researcher's question revealed that private universities are non-

profits and were required to re-invest in their institution's infrastructure and development. In this

regard, the professor discussed the matter in detail:

However, the private universities are by law non-profits—all earnings—none of which is

distributed to the owners. Private Universities don't have owners; they have the board of

trustees. Here the board of trustees is to look after the Universities, surpluses are not

taken out of the Universities; everything is kept. We need those surpluses since it is

important to source the fund for scholarships, the University development, etc.

The participants also reflected on the role of social media in mobilizing the movement

that too created a pressure for the government. One of the professors said:

Since the posts were shared via the social media internationally, the government also

could feel pressure as it was a multi-stakeholder movement. Facebook is a global

platform. When the information was coming via the Facebook, people were not only

being able to see in Bangladesh but also any part of the world and it was tarnishing the

image of the government. Technology and social media has a great part in mobilizing any

movement.

The faculty participant who was an associate professor from BRAC shared his opinion

about why he thought the government gave into the situational pressure from various platforms:

The government realized that no matter what the reasons why they wanted to impose VAT, it is ultimately the student community who will get victimized and therefore, they needed to change their strategy. Also, another equally powerful reason was that the powerful lobbying of some elites who had their vested interest as they did not want to give extra amount money as tax. These people had powerful networking and if they somehow get enraged, the government will be losing support from these influential people in other sectors where these elites/industry leaders held significant influence. In these circumstances, at that moment the government realized that it was not wise to pressurize them (those influential people) anymore.

The faculty member further elaborated the government's predicament by their proposal of VAT on private universities by stating:

The government had to deal with a double-edged sword — the pressure from the students who were apprehensive of victimization, and the pressure of a possible backlash from the University owners who also were elites and influential leaders in several other industries.

Another associate professor from United International University discussed the different dilemmas that the government dealt with while facing non-cooperation from different sectors:"It was the popular demand of the time." The participant came up with his understanding of the situational demand pertaining to the political situation at that point of time:

I think it was in the middle of the government term, the government was preparing for the election also, therefore; maybe the government did not want uprising like that to happen and disrupt the situation. Maybe, the government was a little apprehensive of the situation and they figured, "let us cool it down; it's just a proposal; let us do it some other day, some other time that is good for us!"Maybe it's a coincidence, maybe the students

had figured out that was the right time to get down to the streets and ask for it (the

demand for a total scrap of VAT on their tuition)!

Group: Non-Student Social Activists

The Non-Student Activist/Participants. The researcher interviewed three non-student

activists for the #NoVATonEducation campaign: a nutritionist, a consultant, and a service

holder. Among these three non-student participants who actively participated online, two also

participated in offline activism. They posted regular status updates following the

#NoVATonEducation hashtag during the movement.

What They Remember about the Movement. All of the participants remembered that

students from a private university first started this movement after the government proposed to

have VAT (value-added tax) on fees. One of these interview participants said:"The whole

student community came together and created an Arab Spring-like situation. At the end, I think

the proposal of having VAT was not passed at the national parliament during the 2015 budget

session."

The participant who actively followed the movement on the various media platforms

remembered that the university students were active on social media and the movement spread to

almost every private university in Dhaka.

One or two universities took the lead for this movement via the social media while taking

a stance against this imposition/policy and soon this spread in every private university in

Dhaka. Almost all of these private universities started the movement at the same time and

the students in this way, opposed this proposition of the government.

A non-student participant remembered that the Government unexpectedly imposed a tax

on top of private university tuition:

The students' logic was, if the public university students didn't need to pay value-added taxes, why should they pay extra on top of their tuition fees? Mainly the private university students had protested since the public university students did not pay VAT and they questioned why should they?. As far as I remember, the university students were very active on social media and through this media, the movement started in one or two universities first and later spread to almost every private universities in Dhaka (in the capital city).

One or two universities took the lead for this movement via social media and soon this spread on to every private university in the capital city in taking a stance against this imposition/policy.

According to the other non-student participant, what he remembered about the government's stance was, "The government's argument was to impose some sort of tax on the huge profit the private universities make by charging the students pricey tuition fees."Social media activists narrated what they thought was the students' argument against VAT. When asked what the students' stance were regarding the impasse, one of the participants remembered:

The students' logic was if the public university students didn't need to pay value-added taxes, why should they pay extra on top of their tuition fees? Mainly the private university students had protested since the public university students did not pay any VAT and therefore, they questioned, why should they?

Regarding the students' angle, one of the non-student social media activists explained:

Well, I think the students' argument was education is a basic right and why would someone pay tax for basic rights? Again, why would only the students of private universities pay VAT whereas they spend way more than their counterparts from public universities?

On that issue, another participant opined, "… and since the public education system is not capable of handling the volume of interested undergrad enrolls, the govt. has no moral right to impose tax on their education."

Another participant also said there was dearth of public universities and not all the students get the chance of admission. For public universities, there is huge competition and private universities remain costly. She could empathize with the students' attitude towards the government's stance because she also studied in private schools, having to pay more each semester than the students in the public schools had to. She said, "Those who don't get a chance there (in the public universities); come to the private universities to study."Private universities did not receive financial assistance like subsidies/financial backing/grants.

Non-Student Activists' Opinions. The participants talked about how they felt an urge to join the movement, either by attending the processions or participating online. Regarding their stance, one of them expressed, "This whole proposal of imposing VAT on education seemed a bit imprudent to me!"Another of them termed the idea of government's levying taxes on education as "disturbing."

The participant expressed that the government of Bangladesh, through the Finance Minister's proposition of collecting value-added taxes on education was actually based on a hypothesis which was grounded in the idea that only the wealthy people sent their children to private universities and since possibly many of these people were tax evaders, the Minister had a plan to fulfill the government's motto of realizing tariff collections from these high-ups through this tax-collection design/mechanism. Commenting on this flawed hypothesis, this non-student activist, who was a consultant by profession, rather thought about a solution to the tax collection from the county's income tax evaders. He expressed his suggestion by saying:

Yes, a significant number of parents of the enrollees are people with ill-gotten money.

Yes, the govt. should do everything possible to bring them to justice, if not, at least to tax

net. Easy solution to that would have been firstly, to make it mandatory for the enrollees

to declare TIN (tax identification number) of the parent or guardian who is the source of

funds for the tuition and other expenses. Secondly, making it mandatory for the

universities to submit (a) list of parents and tuition expenses paid to the NBR (National

Board of Revenue) and let NBR work on the taxes of the tax evaders.

He further expressed that these universities are not-for-profit organizations but still make

profit. The profits are withdrawn by some or many board-members by means of over-invoiced

vendor payments, undeclared cash donations taken from enrollees' parents, and officially

through remunerations by holding unnecessarily frequent board meetings. This also could be

addressed by empowering UGC (University Grants Commission) to enable deeper oversight and

proper audits, he also thought. He said, "Solution cannot be imposing tax on tuition. As not all

students come from families with ill-gotten money."

The third non-student activist participant could not get herself involved directly with the

student body who were completely involved in the core movement, but she tried to give morale

support to those who had been the students at that time. She said:

The people like us also felt that their stance and the cause were justified, because at our

times of studentship we did not have to pay any VAT for our education. I empathized

with them deeply since my parents also had to go through a similar situation. During my

studentship, my education expense at a private university was a huge pressure for my

parents. Therefore, I realized, this extra burden would create stretches and pressure to my

parents' wallets, too!

For all these reasons, not only she but other senior fellow alumni offered morale support for this cause through social media, like Facebook groups and university pages.

The Positive Role of Social Media. The non-student activists shared their views regarding the positive role/added impetus that social media played in this movement by saying, "This movement got momentum and goals were achieved," and that "Social media played a vital role in spreading the movement from campus to campus very fast. It helped the general masses to quickly understand what it was about and they showed solidarity." Another participant said:

> Due to the fact that the short span of time within which the call for action reached all the students, would not have been possible without the social media. Since when the students of one or two universities (like the EWU) used the social media to protest, then the students of other universities also realized that they should come under the umbrella of the social media. Had there not been any social media, then it would have been time-consuming to reach each individual universities and ready each of them with a campaign for this cause and this would have given the government enough time to pass the legislation regarding the imposition of VAT. Social media is the reason why the awareness was created so quickly and they could quickly go for offline activism movement and could protest directly against the government's move.

Non-student Role through Social Media. The non-student social media activist participants reflected on their unwavering commitment to the cause. They expressed how they were firm in their support of the #NoVATonEducation movement through social media. One of them also expressed solidarity by going to the procession with the students. Another non-student activist reflected how her alma mater took part in the activism yet she also was critical about some stray incidents that happened during the campaign:

My university formed human chain and participated in rallies on the roads in the

movement. I detested the negative activities that some of the students had undertaken like

making 'NO VAT' graffiti on other peoples' cars. Those were non-removable sprays, and

therefore, those cars had to undergo the process of re-painting! I protested on social

media against this vandalism, these controversial activities in the name of #NOVAT so

that they don't go for such disapproving activities any further! I provided positive morale

support for the constructive activities and discouraged the destructive actions of some of

the activists. I also think, when the government was pondering on their move what to do

regarding the forthcoming decision regarding the VAT, the activists should have given

the government some time rather than relentlessly blocking that disrupted the traffic

movement. They shouldn't have disturbed the general public by blocking the cars (on the

roads) and unnecessarily harassing them.

Participants' Reflection on their Online Posts. The participants reflected on their own

social media posts regarding the movement. The nutritionist non-student social media activist

reflected on what she wrote:

If the gas prices rise; nothing happens to the neither the (private bus) owner, nor the

driver, since it is us (who are the bus riders) who have to count our money in paying

extra! So I am saying after a few days, lest that VAT charges go into the (unclassified)

"other" admission (miscellaneous) fee category again! Revenue is needed to run the state!

There are many other ways to earn for that. Without taxing the education sector, why not

invest here more and give some more time (by deferring taxes on education)! This

investment is a sure payoff than a loss!

The non-student activist who worked for an advertising agency reflected that her social media posts were mostly text yet she also had re-shared the posts regarding student activities. She also changed her profile picture using a frame that was based on the #NoVATonEducation hashtag. She remembered there were many variations of this frame based on the movement. Many universities used their own logos in the protest campaign regarding profile picture change as symbolic protest techniques.

Social Media's Role in the #NoVATonEducation Movement. Almost all of the interviewees agreed that social media had a positive role to play in gaining momentum in lobbying, i.e., applying pressure.

One of the interviewees reflected how new media played a positive role in this movement since it got momentum and could achieve the target goals the activists' had collectively set. She said:

> Involving social media for any movement has a definite impact because of the wide range of coverage it has. Social media gives one the power of reaching millions within the shortest possible way. In case of NoVAT movement, thousands of students were able to share their thoughts and views just using their fingertips.

Another participant, who was an entrepreneur by profession and a social-political activist, explained, "Social media played a vital role in spreading the movement from campus to campus very fast."

One of the participants also thought this new media could make a huge impact:

> Based on their thoughts and views and reactions, more students were able to join them, and a small private university issue became a national issue. Roads were blocked, non-students got attracted, and even parents were on the road. And at the end, based on social

media movement, the authorities were down to the point where they had to rethink the proposal of putting VAT on education.

One of the non-student participants actively participated in the movement. She said she shared her views actively on social media and also went to the procession. When asked to recount her involvement, she explained:

When the social media movements were going on, I used to put status updates sharing my thoughts on each event that might have taken place at any of the road blockade area. I have personally attended many roadblocks and processions that took place at Mohakhali area, especially near BRAC university area.

In emphasizing how social media acted as a suitable and crucial mechanism in reaching the goals for this movement and why this role could not be replaced with anything else, one of the non-student social media activists who also was active offline emphasized:

Because of the power of social media, the movement was able to reach millions of people in the shortest possible time. That helped to gain momentum and ultimately the objective was met. Had social media not been present in this movement, I personally feel this movement would have died at the budding stages...

The entrepreneur participant emphasized the merit of this movement, and that it was not solely based the success on the advantage of the social media. He stated, "The movement had a lot of merits within itself."

Social Media's Importance in Achieving Goals. When asked, "How important was social media in achieving the goals of #NoVATonEducation?" the interviewed non-student activist participants affirmed, "Very important. The role of social media cannot be replaced with

anything else;" "Social media acted as a very efficient catalyst and crowd sourcing tool and organizing tool."

> I believe social media was 100% successful in achieving the goal of this movement and the private university student activists' demand was quite legitimate and the government realized it and in a very short span of time, revised and scrapped it where the social media acted as a facilitator.

> When the researcher asked if a participant thought that offline activism had any role to

play in this movement, she expressed:

> Of course, the offline activism had its merit as well, which again influenced the online activism hundred percent. Although social media was at the forefront of this movement, at the same time, this is also true that the students' blockade of the roads expedited the government action very much; otherwise, the government would not have been so quick in its reaction just by seeing the protests on the social media.

Both channels were there yet online was more effective in the sense that social media was efficient in relaying the campaign events to each individual student. For example, protest planning for a particular venue on peer-to-peer basis would not have been possible without the help of social media. Therefore, in that respect, social media gets the priority.

> *The Role of the Non-Student Activists.* Apart from disapproval on some of the negative actions of an insignificant number of activists, all of the non-student activists interviewed had near-perfect cohesion with this cause, as one of them had expressed solidarity with the movement. Another of the non-student activists thoroughly empathized with the student activists who were fighting for the cause as she herself faced financial encumbrance when her parents had to shoulder the cost of private university education. She provided the moral support by actively

participating in clicktivism by re-sharing the pertinent posts that she felt contained logical demands by the protesting students.

Group: Journalists (News/Media)

Who They Were. In the effort to get an idea about the coverage of the mainstream media publicity regarding the *#NoVATonEducation* movement, the researcher interviewed four journalists in the country's top-performing news media. Three of these journalists in the sample were from two of the country's widely circulated private newspapers, and another journalist was from one of the country's top private television channels. One of them was a columnist, two of them were news reporters, and another participant was a photo journalist. Three of the newspersons were involved in the news production process during the movement—writing columns, reporting, photo/visual editing, and writing content for the newspaper's social media page, except one who had to make a report on the movement only when he was assigned for it.

One of these journalists in the sample was also was a celebrity in the country and for the Bangladeshis all over the world. Therefore, she was someone who was an "influencer," and "a change maker."She had verified accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Viber, and Twitter. She worked for prominent English news daily and talked about the role of the newspaper's contributing role in the #NoVATonEducation movement.

The television news reporter participant in the sample was a prominent journalist for a private news channel in Bangladesh during the #NoVATonEducation movement in 2015. He also maintained his own Facebook page and a blog. His news blog topics reflected on the #NoVATonEducation movement in them while the movement was going on and event after the movement was over.

A staff reporter of a government-backed Bengali newspaper was indifferent regarding the movement. The researcher wanted to know the stance of any newspapers that were unenthusiastic regarding the #NoVATonEducation movement issue.

The fourth participant was a photo journalist. During #NoVAT movement, he was appointed to work for the one country's English newspaper's weekend magazine. His photo stories at the beginning mostly were on the #NoVATonEducation movement. He was on the streets of Dhaka during the movement taking photos for the stories, editing, and captioning, etc., on this particular topic.

The Participant Journalists' Social Media Presence. The lady journalist interview participant had quite a strong digital media presence due to her celebrity status. She had verified accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Viber, and Twitter. She personally had her own pages. Her assistant, the photo journalist, another interview participant in this study was also active on multiple platforms but he had started a lot of self-censorship in the recent past. This risk-averse behavior implied what may be the unforeseen consequences of the fairly recent Digital Security Act, out of fear that the law may be detrimental to one's freedom of expression. He, however, was not so cautious. He became more cautious, like keeping his profile locked and keeping an eye on who followed him and what they were up to. He started to think over the possible consequences of his posts.

The television channel news reporter was personally against the imposition of taxes on education. He feared that if taxes were levied on education, commercialization of education could taint the real purpose of education altogether. He also was against the public suffering during the protests. Therefore, this television news reporter contributed articles in different media to raise awareness on the issue and drew the attention of the government and the students.

He also shared those articles and his personal opinion on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

The staff reporter, the fourth participant for the interview, worked for the government-backed newspaper Janakantha. This is the reason why his involvement with Facebook was more risk-averse in the sense that he had played the role of an observer. For example, he observed whether the shared content was credible or not, or, in other words, whether it was fake, etc. He said:

> We used to conceive news ideas from observing the Facebook trends (i.e., the burning issues of discussion, debate/controversies like no VAT movement, quota reform) and consciously averted showing any inclinations during any situations of any partial stance in liking, sharing, or giving comments.

Although he admitted that it was not always practically possible to refrain from doing so.

The Journalists' Involvement. The celebrity journalist opined that the English newspaper she worked for had a *"significant role to play, especially in helping the students' voice reach the policymakers, so that the government and the policymakers were able to understand what the students were trying to say! Because, obviously slapping a VAT on education didn't make any sense (for) private education or public education, especially in (a country like Bangladesh)!"*

When asked why she thought it was unjustified, she compared the scenario of Bangladesh's education infrastructure with that of neighboring India. She expressed that India was an enormous country compared to Bangladesh and the quality of their education was much better than what was offered in Bangladesh at that moment. Therefore, if any Indian students wanted to go for higher education, the students' first preference would be getting admission to the public universities and somehow or the other, they are accommodated. If they are not, they

go for state board colleges. She could reflect on the Indian education scenario because she not only had worked with Indian colleagues but also had been to Indian schools. While talking about the universities there as she experienced, she expressed:

> In that huge country, there are major Universities in all the states, in all the districts. But, in Bangladesh, everything is so Dhaka-centric; everything revolves around, say, Dhaka University. If you want to go for engineering education (public university in Dhaka); there is only BUET. If you want to go for medical education (public medical college, in Dhaka) there is only one, Dhaka Medical College. So, if people want their kids to study in Bangladesh; they would have to opt for private university education. So, the scenario is very different for Bangladesh; we NEED private universities! Because the infrastructure is such, that you cannot accommodate so many students in public universities!

She also reflected that people opt for private universities in the capital city of Dhaka, no matter if they earned admission to any public institutions elsewhere in the country.

> She also clarified the myth about the demographics of private university students:
> It is not true that people with money, families with money, (that) only send their kids to private universities. There are many, many middle class families, even many lower middle class families, whose children are attending private universities! How are they managing it? Oh yes, most of the kids are actually working; they have their own businesses, they're doing private tuitions, they are doing a lot of things!

She said there was nothing else for them to do except making it a point to get educated. As few students from the lower middle class were getting their tuition paid by their parents, she said:

> The lower middle class families' children have to fend for themselves as their parents cannot afford their tuition in the private universities. Education is so limited in the

country, so, when a regular student from well-to-do family would normally sign up for 4

courses in a semester; these students coming from the lower income families would

possibly sign up for only one.

She mentioned about a particular student she knew personally who worked for a travel agency

and earned enough to probably fund one course a semester:

These people are working hard and why are they doing this? Because, education is so

limited in this country and on top of this, if you slap VAT on these courses, it will be

very difficult for them to afford it!

This particular journalist, who graduated from the first ever private university in the country, and

her other teammates at the newspaper could thoroughly empathize with the private university

students' concerns of the value-added taxes on private university tuition. This is the reason why

she and her team at the newspaper played a vital role in sharing the information via reports,

editorials in the mainstream media, and also via small videos on YouTube.

Her newspaper "had an unbiased outlook towards the #NoVATonEducation movement"

as they covered the students from all over the country, yet they also wanted to report the side of

the government. Speaking about their newspaper's stance about the movement, she said:

Everyone was on the students' side, the parents—the people who had to spend money and

everything, of course! Then again, the newspaper also wanted to get the voice of the

government side—of the Finance Minister, the Education Minister as well.

Mentioning the newspaper she worked for, she reflected:

There were editorials from both the sides! And I think that is how it's supposed to be!

That was the stance of the (mentioning the newspaper) as a whole. But, for me and my

section (of the newspaper), we were probably a little more inclined towards the students,

we were probably trying to get their voices across!

From the editorial's point of view, her newspaper was actually trying to balance, so they could

work on one side if they wanted to because they knew "there was another section that was

working on the other side."

The photo journalist participant was "particularly on the streets." Regarding his work and

their stance from the newspaper, he revealed:

It was easier to get in touch with those people most of the time since the newspaper I

worked for featured what was practiced in real life of the youth, the youngsters of the

country—how they were thinking and how they were perceiving the reality there, which

was also a part of my interest.

He lived in the Road # 27 Dhanmondi, a kind of a hub of many universities, and if there were

any protests going on around there, blockades usually started in Mirpur Road, and after that

Satmasjid road, and the rest of the avenues. So, for him, it was apparent or visible what was

happening, why, and how spontaneous was the degree of peoples' involvement and energy in

joining the cause. Initially, he observed that the mainstream media did not pay any heed to this

activism unless and something newsworthy happened.

Journalistic Practice during #NoVATonEducation. The journalists gave an idea about the

journalistic practice during the #NoVATonEducation movement in their respective workplaces

(Newspapers/Television Channel).The reporter for a news television channel commented about

the delicate circumstances during the movements like #NoVAT. He mentioned that it was quite

challenging to maintain complete impartiality when it came to a movement for a legitimate/just

cause. If there was an iota of gaffe or a tight spot somewhere, both the government and the opposition would term the journalists as their adversaries. He commented:

> We tried our level best to make feature reporting on the legitimate cause of student demands based on impartiality. We also have made reporting on the issue, while forewarning that the intensity (fervor/zealousness)of the movement should not be so severe that the general public suffers being a scapegoat of the situation in the end.

He created news reports for television and wrote articles for magazines and social media, which reflected if the VAT on education was fair or legitimate. He clarified his personal and the news channel's position by saying, "We have been protesting against the commercialization of education."

The reporter from the government-backed Bengali newspaper talked about his assignment on the student campaign. He said that during the "climax of the movement," he had an assignment in the Gulshan area. From Panthapath to Birsreshtha Jahangir gate, his car could barely progress on the roads and had to walk on foot towards his destination. He explained what he witnessed:

> The whole city came to a complete standstill — both sides of the roads, all the vehicles on the flyover, i.e., the traffic on the flyover paused, engines halted, and no sound anywhere! Only slogans were heard from a distance! After reaching Mohakhali, I saw students of BRAC University having a sit-down protest on the road and yelling slogans. I felt it was a controlled (composed, disciplined, restrained) movement. Never even noticed any safety threat for the pedestrians. Nonetheless, there was suffering still. (I) don't remember any provocative allusion in the students' slogans. Those were general claims/demands (like)—'Don't want VAT on education! Cancel (VAT), etc.'...

The journalist working for the English joined the students sitting on the grounds in the streets while they blocked the roads at Gulshan 2. With the student activists' permission, she took pictures, shot short videos, and emailed them immediately to her team. The video teams then interviewed some of the student activists.

She said that her team members were all over Dhaka:

I live over here (implying the Gulshan area), my photographer lives in Dhanmondi, there was another team member who lives in Puran Dhaka (Old Dhaka), as the movement was happening all over the city, so obviously I needed them to participate from different corners. I remember while the movement was going on, my photographer called me saying, "Apu (sister), I'm stuck because I'm in Road #27 and there's a movement going on here!" I said, "Great! Start taking pictures! And if you can write something, like tits and bits and everything, just start sending to whoever is at work right now."So I think my team did a lot more...

The photo journalist collected and edited photos for the newspaper's weekend magazine that covered the political history, activism, and societal ills while also promoting the practice of free-thinking locally. They also lobbied through their own channels to appeal to international media outlets like *The New York Times*, Al-Jazeera, *The Guardian*, Asia Network, etc. He said: "It was like a domino effect when an international news agency published the news; from them the other news agencies also became interested to feature this movement through their publication/broadcasting."

The photojournalist followed the activists of the #NoVATonEducation movement regarding who they were and what they were doing. Unlike many other movements usually nipped in the bud due to politics, there was no political interference. He opined:

In this organic movement, everything was handled in a very poised manner. Within these organic eruptions, it was amazing how this movement was organized at ease where the private Universities got connected, one by one. But at the same time, since neither the mainstream media was disseminating negative news, or not developing any news in their favor, they (implying the student activists) were fuming at the mainstream media's stance. I was sensing that in their attitude and their approach towards me.

They expressed grief to this reporter on how the mainstream media was not realizing their point of view and their toil in fighting for a legitimate cause.

Initially, this newspaper team observed how the movement was developing as it was emerging little by little. The movement was less coherent and the expression of the student body's disappointment at the government's stance was in a disconnected way. However, with time, when the universities gelled together in a collective effort, the movement intensified. Still, the mainstream media, i.e., the big name newspapers like theirs and other newspapers were not covering it.

He also confirmed that as their policy was to cover the stance of both the sides of the parties involved to a story and since there was still not any clearance on the newspaper coverage on that issue from their superiors (e.g., editor in chief), he and his boss decided to cover the newspaper's social media edition on the #NoVATonEducation issue as there were not any regulations on that still. From that time onwards, that newspaper started covering what was going on about this activism 24/7 on their newspaper's social media page. About the coverage he said:

In this aspect, the journalists should cover what is the "truth" and that should be the "bias," but for that moment, since the matter was sensitive, therefore, we started out with neutral representation. Other than voicing our own opinion or giving our own

perspective, we started out with asking people regarding their opinion on this particular issue. We had asked not only the students, but also those who got stranded in streets due to the road blockages, etc. One interesting thing we noticed was that public had a positive attitude and support towards the movement.

Since they did not have the resources allocated for covering all the universities concerned, they tried to reach out to those who were already actively involved in the cause. Therefore, this photo journalist asked them to send their pictures, voice recordings, and texts in order to amplify the voices in this movement by getting the representation from other universities. They collected these by including the activists' pictures, written texts, and recordings to ensure the process of representation, authenticity, and accountability. Students initially resisted while talking to this journalist, thinking he may be indulging in espionage of some sort. However, within about three days, the students started to talk frankly and freely. In this process, interviews, live coverage, video footages, etc. were also shot and sent to this newspaper representative. Through all these, it was revealed that the myth about a particular representation of the society regarding the private university students was destroyed: "It was revealed that people coming to study in these private Universities had so many different kinds of struggles!"When the journalist's team disseminated the videos featured on their newspaper's social media page, within an hour the videos went viral, reaching over 150,000 views.

Realizing the intensity of the issue, the chief editor of the newspaper ultimately gave permission for a greater coverage by engaging more reporters. After a meeting, while seeing the trending social media coverage, the first two mainstream newspapers—*The Daily Star* (English) and *Prothom Alo* (their sister concern in Bengali) sourced the contents to cover the #NoVATonEducation movement. Many other mainstream media newspapers as well as the

television channels and radio stations started to follow this trend. Since the entire event was non-violent gradually people from other walks of life also joined.

Regarding the photo journalist's participation during the movement, he reflected:

To a certain point, the protests remained non-violent; then the protests started to get very interesting, very festive! It was mid-summer and it was extremely hot outside with crazy sunshine and the activists kept on working from 6 am in the morning till 12 midnight, and on top of that many times it rained all on a sudden in the evening. Despite all that, they (the student activists) still never left their station, it was very tiring, nonetheless, for all that work for such long hours! We tried to give proper focus to the energy of the movement; we also tried to boost their energy as much as possible....

Journalists' Opinion of Social Media's Role. The photo journalist:

It is of course "yes," but I also think there is also a reason behind that, no? The middle class were connected, and the middle class were very active, this movement affected a specific demographic, a specific class of people. I believe that a huge portion of this movement was deriving from the middle class or like, had a huge support from the people of the middle class, and since like it was happening in Dhaka, at the heart of the country, that's why the social media was like, actually super effective!

Here the situational influence also made it have a breakthrough and since it was also a hub of the city where people were more connected via the social media, especially the Facebook; otherwise, this movement would not have become as successful since even a slight drift from this 'hub' also makes a huge difference, people are neither that much connected and nor as tech-savvy. They also have a different focus. Here the spatial difference also makes sense, *"It's also very lucky case! It doesn't work the same way everywhere in Bangladesh."*

When asked to comment whether social media had any facilitating role in causing a breakthrough in the movement, one of the participant journalists from the English news daily said, "It did, and it always does."The news channel reporter also was positive about the merit of the social media over the traditional media:

> See, social media now is the name of a formidable force. The traditional media in its traditional ways try to impose censorship at will. But, despite generating a lot of fake news item circulation, one gets to observe what may be the real public opinion or sentiment here. Here, a person is much more independent in expressing the freedom of speech although currently, the government is trying to muffle that using its upper-hand by enacting a Digital Security Act. With all that said, in Bangladesh perspective, social media is more potent than the traditional media.

While differentiating the two modes of communication, he expressed that virtually, it was the movement on #NoVATonEducation that got a huge response using the "call for action." He mentioned:

> Nowadays, congregations are hardly effective when it comes to raising awareness or campaigning for a cause. Moreover, there are restrictions from the law enforcing agencies regarding the arrangements of these congregations in public places. In such situations, the main reliance is on the social media in full swing for the demand to set forth. So, I think there was a breakthrough in the no-VAT movement with the social media.

He also mentioned seeing similar engagements in the Quota Reform Movement and the movement concerning the Demands for Safe Roads in the country.

The staff reporter of the news daily also admitted the merit of the social media in facilitating the demands:

My observation is, with this movement's spread and success; social media had a very important association. Throughout the capital city in order to mobilize this movement, Facebook had a huge role to play. New updates, pictures of the movement, video footages were accessible every minute. The huge participation of female students evident in the pictures/videos gave this movement a "non-political" form. Whatever the achievement was possible was entirely due to Facebook.

When the celebrity journalist was asked to comment on whether "this movement actually was social media driven first, and the mainstream media later joined it, "she agreed: Most of the things, most of these movements are actually social media driven, (since) mainstream (media) will never tell people to go for a movement since that is not their job actually, especially, now (as) things have changed! Social media actually gathers people because it is a platform for people. And you know, you can easily find someone else living like, in the north pole who probably share the same interests as you do, (and) that's the beauty of social media. So the NoVatOn... movement, just like the other movements as well, especially if that's related to the youth; social media did drive it.

Explaining further about the difference between social media and the mainstream media movements that start at the grassroots level, she further clarified, "The news and everything did spread on social media first, and I think the mainstream media were just there to support everything, to formalize everything, I think that's where the mainstream (media) is there, you know, yeah!"

Whether Social Media Activism was a Challenge or an Opportunity. The photo journalist narrated:

In my opinion, it should be an opportunity, right? It gives you the power to reach out to

thousands and millions of people if you know how to! Like if you have the knowledge of

on how and what kind of mechanism you have to spreading the word to such a vast

audience. At the same time, it is kind of jeopardy, too.

The news reporter from the television channel expressed:

Until recently, people, in general, have expressed their views openly on social media. But

at the end of the year, once the government passed the Digital Security Act, that freedom

was reduced. In Bangladesh, the anti-government criticism is not tolerated on social

media in Bangladesh. Many journalists including journalists and ordinary people have

been jailed for criticizing the government or their teammates. In such a situation, despite

the various opportunities and facilities available to social media in Bangladesh, there is a

lot of challenge now in the global context.

The journalist from a government-backed newspaper opined:

Not only as a challenge but also as an opportunity. (Social Media) creates the level of

challenge/opportunity for Bangladesh's socio-economic and political backdrop, I believe.

The issues where political involvement is much, these have greater challenges. Say, for

example, the Quota Reform movement. Also with regards to the social problems.

The Quota Reform Movement was another student movement in Bangladesh (in 2018) where the

Bangladeshi students vehemently protested the Bangladesh government's recruitment system of

reserving government jobs for some pre-established quota system.

The journalist who contributed editorials on #NoVATonEducation thought social media

activism was more of a challenge nowadays because of the possibility of fake news. If there

could be something good going on in the city and some people shared the information on social

media, there would always be a group of people who would go against it and push their own agenda, which is often how fake news get created. Fake news was relatively easy to believe, especially when the youth are involved. One needed to verify before sharing something since there maybe rumors spreading. When asking why the #NoVATonEducation movement had few rumors, she opined that this movement had happened a couple of years ago when the variable of rumors spreading was not in existence and only became more prevalent over time. Rumors and fake stories have always had the power to spread, but are far less prevalent then. Fake news had little chance of flourishing, since "... many of these activities were also being filmed, a lot of visuals, and photos, so you could know what they were talking about!"This intensity of the movement happened so quickly that news was composed mostly of pictures. Since the students had access to smartphones, it was easy for them to capture real-time photos and videos. So there less scope for rumors to flourish in that movement during that time.

V. DISCUSSION

2015 marked a departure from traditional forms of protest and initiated a novel style of student movement in Bangladesh. Previously, the protests were violent whenever the student activists stood up against any oppression. But in 2015, the people witnessed peaceful demonstrations about the students' basic right to education. This originated as dissent against the government's policy of levying value-added taxes on private university education. The proposed 10% VAT was reduced to 7.5% in the draft of the budget of 2015-16, yet the students did not relent or take a softer line in their protests against this imposition. The government's initial obstinacy regarding the VAT made the students take a firm counter stance via offline and online activism from late June to early September, 2015. This fight ultimately made the capital city of Dhaka totally dysfunctional for a couple of days. The government ultimately bowed to the students' demands. On September 14, 2015, the government reviewed its value-added tax (VAT) proposition/impending directive and withdrew it completely.

The literature review centered on the primary issue of activism. Contemporary social media activism case studies bear evidence that marginalized citizens resort to social media activism. Social media activism can increase awareness if not always positive change. The #NoVATonEducation case example impacted public opinion for a desirable change in the existing social privileges of fundamental rights like education.

Table 3presents the questions driving this study, provides a brief summary of relevant findings, and points to key sources that address the questions. This table provides the framework for this chapter, which ties together the historical perspectives from the review of the literature and the findings from the case study that is central to this research project.

Table 3: Summary of Findings and Sources for Research Questions

Research Questions (RQs)	Brief Summary of Findings	Key Sources
Overall Research Question: What were the key elements of the successful #NoVATonEducation social media campaign?	The government's 2015 proposal to charge a VAT on private post-secondary education was unpopular with students and their parents. Social media provided a platform for marginalized students to mobilize action against the government's stance on the charging of VAT on education. Social media helped students peacefully organize protests. These protests impacted public opinion in support of students' legitimate right to education. With the hashtag activism #NoVATonEducation the activists were also able to reframe the debate about this public and economic policy using cogent argument, public display of unity, and widespread deployment of non-violent advocacy. Both social media and street-level activism were coordinated and persistent. This led the government to rethink its stance and reconsider the potential political consequences of the proposed policy.	A general timeline of the issues and activism related to #NoVATonEducation were obtained from the analysis of mainstream media content. Interviews with administrators, educators, and journalists provided perspective on underlying concerns and government actions. Interviews with students and other activists provided insights on how the social media campaign was developed and how social media influenced offline activism. Social media content provided insights into message strategies and tactics.

Table 3 (Continued)

Research Questions (RQs)	Brief Summary of Findings	Key Sources
RQ1. How did the #NoVATonEducation campaign develop over time?	Student dissent began with June 2015 proposal of 7.5% VAT. Students' proposed the total elimination of VAT on education.	A general timeline of the issues and activism related to #NoVATonEducation were obtained from analysis of mainstream media content.
	Students formed VAT-Birodhi Shikkharthi Oikko, which coalesced around #NoVATonEducation hashtag.	
	Police attacks on peaceful student protests driving force in unifying students and organizing movement.	Individual in-depth interview data from the relevant participants provided additional insight on how the movement developed.
	After early face-to-face meetings, students created a Facebook page.	
	Facebook enabled coordination between the far off regions. And provided a platform for communicating about issues not being covered by mainstream media.	Publicly shared social media posts show how social media was used for both coordination and persuasion.
	Students shaped public opinion through storytelling, public speaking, and music composition.	
	Street protests heightened awareness of issues and made the capital city totally dysfunctional until the government rolled back its plans on tax imposition.	

Table 3 (Continued)

Research Questions (RQs)	Brief Summary of Findings	Key Sources
RQ2. What tools did activists use in communicating about the #NoVATonEducation campaign?	Traditional placards, posters, and banners were used in the early stages to lodge complaints about the VAT. Social media messages enabled the coordination of activities. Skits, exhibitions, street dramas, and songs were part of street demonstrations and mobilized opposition to the VAT. Social media focused on visual and entertaining content designed to "go viral". Activists became fairly sophisticated at integrating multiple message elements.	Individual in-depth interview data from the relevant participants described tools used. Social media posts included examples of communication tools.
RQ3. What was the role of social media in this case of successful student activism?	Facebook (public posts, messenger, and live options) was social media tool with broadest reach. Twitter and YouTube supplemented. Social media messages about police actions helped in mobilizing protests. #NoVATonEducation hashtag was central message element that mobilized protests. Social media provided free speech platform before Digital Security Act.	Social media content was the primary information source. Interviews with influencers provided insight into the uses and importance of social media. Mainstream media provided context on movement.

Table 3 (Continued)

Research Questions (RQs)	Brief Summary of Findings	Key Sources
RQ4. What core message strategies were used to mobilize this movement?	Many messages used emotional appeals but some framed access to education as a legitimate right using rational appeals and cogent arguments.	Social media content was the primary information source.
	Music and literature adapted from earlier revolutions made link to prior movements.	Interviews with influencers provided more depth of insight into message strategy formation.
	Humor was used to show the disconnect between the reality students and their families face and the official government statements Acute need appeals were used for urgent, specialized topics such as blood donation in emergency situations.	Mainstream media content highlighted some of the most effective strategies.
RQ5. What other factors influenced the success of the campaign?	Smartphones reached the target audiences for real-time reporting and coordinating.	Individual in-depth interview data from the relevant participants were the primary source of insights on additional success factors
	Middleclass was connected via Facebook.	
	Location of the movement is hub of internet connectivity where people were tech-savvy.	
	Social media tools enabled the international spread of the movement.	
	Government officials realized that students were a large percentage of voters in upcoming elections.	Content of both mainstream media and social media post provided some additional context for success factors.
	Private university board members' who opposed the VAT were an influential funding source for election campaigns.	
	Widespread messaging via social media with video evidence of actions made it difficult for the people interested in foiling the campaign to spread rumors through traditional sources.	

Table 3 (Continued)

Research Questions (RQs)	Brief Summary of Findings	Key Sources
RQ5. What other factors influenced the success of the campaign? (Continued)	The mental maturity of activists kept the campaign focused on peaceful activism rather than violence/destruction, which is typical for the Southeast Asian context.	
	Even though street protests were non-violent, they were highly disruptive to the capital city.	
	Activists were creative and coordinated in their messaging.	
	Describing education as a right that should not be subject to VAT resonated with citizens.	

Overall Research Question.

The overarching question driving this research was examining the key elements driving the success of the #NoVATonEducation social media campaign. Those who are potentially affected by or interested in public policy decisions believe they have the right to be involved in the decision-making process (Kreiken, 2019). Democracy and public participation are closely related. Many countries have constitutionally protected processes for allowing members of the public to express their disagreement with government actions (DPMC, 2017, Cogan & Sharpe, 1986, DeSario, Langton, & Stuart 1987). Countries like Bangladesh, however, do not have formal processes for involving citizen participation in its policy-making. However, in recent years, the advent of social media provided citizens of Bangladesh a mechanism for peacefully organizing and protesting government action.

The hashtag #NoVATonEducation provided the focal point for the convergence of activism and communication, particularly using Facebook, and acted as a catalyst for a social

movement. Using the hashtag, Twitter also quickly captured not only the attention of the domestic audiences but also helped grab the attention of the international media and enabled a wider distribution, amplifying the messages, and shaping public opinion. The usage of a hashtag for this campaign actively invited audience attention in the discourse and empowered the timely diffusion of information. Using Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube as social media tools, while using the hashtag on these platforms, facilitated invocation of context, histories, emotions, and calls for action (Moscato, 2016). New media also enabled a novel wave of using traditional media articles focused on the issue by cross-posting in order to capture the attention of the activists involved and create engagement regarding the policy. The hashtag activists reframed the debates about this public and economic policy of and used social media to change the public perceptions pertaining to the question of the demand of tertiary education and the government's inability to meet this need. The way the media framed the activists in this campaign successfully shaped the attitudes of the general public and stakeholders regarding the government's policy formulation and implementation, which ultimately made the government reconsider the consequences of their policy implementation.

When looking at the recent development of fundamental freedom, the countries once thought as invulnerable to authoritarian temptations are now imposing restrictions on basic rights and autonomy (Zaman, 2018; Mahmud, 2018). Interestingly, despite the impending threat of restrictions on the rights of civil society, citizens are fighting back against the attacks on offline activism, independent media, and online freedom via civil society alliances. One such instance was the activism on #NoVATonEducation of the private university students of Bangladesh. Despite knowing that the government was going to impose the controversial draconian law of the Digital Security Act (Bhuiyan, 2015; Safi, 2017; The Daily Star, 2017) anytime soon, the

activists for this cause did not move back from their staunch stance and determination to fight against the government's policy on levying value-added taxes on private university education in the country. With peaceful protests, they tried to dissent with their successful campaigning against the government's policy with non-violent participation, mass organizations, public display of unity (Tilly and Wood, 2016) while being true to their commitment.

The audience in these types of social campaigns generally gets to witness the interplay of protest movements online and offline and how they factor into the online activism literature a great deal (Ciszek, 2016; Moscato, 2016; Freezel, 2018). This movement also witnessed the same phenomena. The opinion leaders usually play a great role in filtering political information to receivers via their personal networks. This filtering phenomenon was coined by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955. This two-step flow of communication helps to influence an otherwise inattentive audience as well as impart greater access to political information. In doing so, it also facilitates to broaden the audience in any particular media channel.

The private university students' common agenda made them collaborate and take part in united action of dissent against the government's impending action, which was vital to the society (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001). The current trend in activism is getting and sharing news via social media, which is on the rise (Gottfried & Shearer, 2016). Prior research attests to the fact that social media may stimulate the agenda-setting effect, which often happens from the social sharing of political news. This also relates to increased incidental exposure of news related to political information among those who may be apathetic to it. Prior research also confirms that agenda-setting could occur by incidental uncovering of political news stories on social media platforms among those who are indifferent to political news (Freezel, 2018). Drawing inspiration of the country's 1971 liberation war and language movement of 1952, the Facebook generation

of Bangladesh in recent decades has embraced the widespread practice of nonviolence as displayed in the #NoVATonEducation campaign. This generation started a revolution through their creative use of new media and information technology (Bock, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012).

The mainstream media reports revealed some reasons for the withdrawal decision. The main reason stated by the ruling Awami League sources addressed preventing the student protest campaign veering off track. The other important factor reported by the mainstream media was preventing the ruling party image from tarnishing any further, i.e., preserving the "popular" image of the ruling party, especially keeping in mind the young voters i.e., the students (Bhattacharjee, 2015). The feedback from the interview participants also confirmed this idea being a crucial factor in the campaign reaching a breakthrough. The interview participants specifically mentioned the situational influences, i.e. the government's forthcoming election year being a major factor in this regard.

The location of the movement was also a favorable aspect. According to many of the interview participant's feedback, as this movement was Dhaka-based, major most capital city dwellers were more tech-savvy than the rest of the social media users of the country. The activists in the capital themselves were the Facebook generation, who were adept in mobilizing a huge movement online. This became quite a favorable, timely, and advantageous factor for them, according to many interview respondents of this study.

Many attributed the mental maturity of the activists to be a factor of success for this movement. The student activists opted for a peaceful movement with no chaos or vandalism and peacefully protested for what they called their legitimate rights. This protest was unique, owned not only by those who were directly affected and their guardians/families but also the general public, politicians, intellectuals, and socially respected persons. Interestingly, the persons

interview who were at the forefront of the movement never wanted to brand this movement's success as a result of their noteworthy contributions. Every one of them said that they tried their best and gave credit to all those who protested. All of them felt the movement was a communal success.

RQ1: How the Campaign Developed Over Time.

The first research question addressed here examines how the #NoVATonEducation campaign developed over time. In June, 2015, it was proposed in the Bangladesh national budget to levy 10% of taxes on private university education, and then sometime after in July, it was trimmed down to 7.5% VAT. One day later, it was proposed in parliament, and the students from two private universities in Dhanmondi of Dhaka remonstrated against this proposal by forming human chains. Two days after, the students from Daffodil University wanted to organize a rally for the purpose of forming a human chain in front of the Sangsad Bhavan (National Assembly/Parliament), yet they faced obstacles from the police from there. Police foiled this attempt and arrested one of the students and took him to the Sher-E-Bangla police station, where he was detained for a couple of hours. Soon after the student's detention and subsequent release due to lobbying by some influential student-leaders, other students began protesting about the incident.

Students from the University of Liberal Arts and other private universities, especially the Universities located around Road 7/A, joined a rally in Dhanmondi. They demanded the total scrapping of the taxes on education and cautioned about the fruition of a greater movement against the taxes unless the government withdrew its tentative plans. Soon after, some of the influential students of the private universities around Dhanmondi liaised among themselves to create a platform named VAT-Birodhi Shikkharthi Oikko(Anti-VAT Students' Alliance) for this

cause. Initially, approximately 20-25 students from different private universities (namely: University of Liberal Arts, East-West, Daffodil, and Stamford University) as well as some student leaders from public universities like Dhaka University and political student organizations (namely: Chhatra League, Chhatra Union) all got together. Students from the private medical Anwar Khan College also joined.

The students at the forefront initially conceived the name VAT-Birodhi Shikkharthi Oikko(Student Alliance against VAT) and then a group of eight students from the University of Liberal Arts renamed it as "no vat on education."This common platform was created as an association/lobby group to speak against all kinds of value-added tax imposition. Although VAT was levied against English medium schools years earlier, none of those schools spoke against it. Although private universities forbade student politics, there was a need for a platform to speak against the government's value-added tax directive. Interview participants revealed that the students coined the term for this platform while discussing amongst themselves during tea breaks in the cafés, and the name #NoVATonEducation was proposed and accepted by all

The student activists wanted the title of the platform to be all-inclusive for those with similar demands pertaining to value-added tax so that the motto and the scope of this particular activism could be taken to a greater platform using the same domain. A ULAB (The University of Liberal Arts) student's house at road 7/A named Mistri Bari served as the hub and had a high-end computer that was utilized to design the logo for the movement. This emblem was used throughout the campaign for posters, profile pictures, and a Facebook page.

Canary yellow was chosen for the emblem's background. There was a myth that had been quite customarily established in the country regarding the private university students. The private university students were called 'Farm Chickens' (*Farm'erMurgi* in Bengali) in jest, which was

part myth and part reality. However, this was not the real cause behind choosing the color canary yellow. Rather, it had a different background. Actually, it was '*Himu*,' a popular fictional character of noted playwright Humayun Ahmed's literature that was taken into consideration in the background while creating the logo. The campaign elements the student activists used in any of their communication had followed the concept of integrated promotion, as they incorporated the same elements of the emblem in most of the posts on social media. This symbolized the activists' unity in all the communications concerning this activism. Social media was a key driver of communication and coordination in this regard.

The activists actually tried to coordinate between the two regions of Dhanmondi and Banani/Baridhara areas. The traffic jams in Dhaka and the fact that different universities had different class timings made it practical for students to coordinate via social media. Facebook, therefore, became the best platform to reach out and keep everyone in the loop. Social media was also useful for liaising with the press. These student activists at the forefront sat with reporters a number of times for coordination meetings. They also held small-scale exhibitions and street-dramas (potho-natok), too. According to the students, no movement was complete without music. One of the student leaders made instantaneous unscripted rap music while campaigning on the roads. The student activists used famous songs that were the lifeblood of many earlier movements of Bengali culture, like the national poet Nazrul Islam's revolutionary song "Karar Oi Louho Kopaat, Bhenge Fel, Kor Re Lopaat Shikol-Pujar Pashaan Bedee!"(Meaning "These Iron Gates of Prison… Destroy them and obliterate... the Stone Plinths of Chain Worship!")

The police attack on East-West students on September 9, 2015, was the main driving force towards unifying all the students in various universities in Dhaka. The attack was the trigger-point for the student uprising. The students from that time onwards became a united force

to work towards the cause by protesting. Within one or two days of around that date, there were people who tried to persuade the protesters to back-off by predicting that this protest would be fruitless. Nevertheless, from that point onwards, the students blocked the roads in protest. However, the public stance towards the movement was surprisingly very empathetic towards the private university students. The student leader activists observed that the general public, who usually showed signs of anger due to road blockage or rallies in protestation, were of the opinion that since the students were fighting for a good cause, why not endure this suffering for the sake of it. The student activists had pledged to go for an organized movement against the imposition of value-added taxes on education, and in their demand, they fought for total scrapping of the tax.

The mainstream media's absence made the student activists utilize social media where they could easily communicate and interact with the target audience and get their messages across without any hindrance. According to respondent interview feedback, there were 33 million Bangladeshi youth who were the regular Facebook users. On October 11, 2015, according to Socialbakers, Bangladesh had nearly 300,00,000 Facebook users (Business Habit, 2015). Even with the conservative rough estimate of 30 million users, it was likely that Dhaka had more active and tech-savvy users. Therefore, one could safely conclude, targeting the youth for this campaign via social media, specifically with Facebook, was a wise strategy.

The students who were early in their undergraduate studies during the #NoVAT movement protested alongside older students and took the lead. The organizers, i.e., the student activists, utilized these types of speakers' opinion leadership, their art of storytelling, and their songs to provide support and encouragement to those activists who had fought for this cause. The creative opinion leaders personally composed rap songs based on the native language, Bengali,

that portrayed the realities of the private university students' struggle relating the #NoVATonEducation movement. These songs were composed during the intense protest of the movement, which was during the last week of the movement timeline. One of the leaders uploaded the song on YouTube and cross-posted on Facebook. The music was adapted from an American musician's song.

During the earlier state of the movement, soon after most of the classes got dismissed around 4 PM, the students gathered around the campus of their respective universities. They soon realized that this way of meeting on the corners of the streets and discussing on the pavements was not much effective. Primarily, for the Universities like the University of Liberal Arts, State University of Bangladesh, Daffodil University, University of Asia Pacific, etc., the gathering spot was Road 7/A of Dhanmondi since these were the universities around that area. Later on, some more spots were utilized, like the spots around Road 27 of Dhanmondi, to have more activists joining their hands in protest as a cohesive force for the cause. The coordination and planning of activities together were done quite a bit during the students' face-to-face meetings.

The students tried to stimulate the excitement and intensify the zeal for this movement while indulging into creative pursuits like performing street dramas and skits when participating in offline activism, where most of the dialogues were impromptu (although many sequences were planned beforehand) and were aimed to entertain and motivate the audience who were actively participating in the activism campaign. These skits were created based on the shadow of *'Heerok Rajar Deshe,'* a very popular classic satire Bengali cinema of Satyajit Ray's satire against state oppression. While students had done offline activism based on this theme of the satire by slightly adapting it as *'He Rock Rajar Deshe,'* each university came up with their own set of dialogues and own adaptations based on the theme. During the first stages of offline

activism, the students used to start campaigning after 4 pm after their classes were dismissed. But, later on, during the intense stage of the movement, the students did not go to classes. While the campaigns were going on in front of the University campus premises, the teachers used to be beside the students for overseeing in order to avoid any untoward situation, avert university image crises, or any political blunder during the students' activism. When the students went for offline activism away from the campus, then the teachers could not keep a watchful eye on the situation. Yet, the students were peaceful in their demonstrations.

The students, who took part in the activism online changed their profile pictures based on the #NoVATonEducation theme. These were pictures featured with a yellow background where there the "no vat" emblem written in red letters. The dedicated page for this activism campaign connected to the private university alliance was a combined effort of online activism of all the private universities. At the initial stage, the students were scattered in their activism efforts, but later on, all of them came under the same platform. In addition to face-to-face communication, much of coordination of the joint movement was done via online correspondence. According to the activist leaders, the information that spread outside Bangladesh helped to create a force of compellation regarding the movement. This probably made the government realize there was probably no use to linger this issue any further. Initially, there was an attempt from some of the public university students to create a divide between the private and the public university students. But, that attempt did not fare well.

RQ2: Key Media Communication Tools.

The second research question asked what the different key media communication tools were and how they were used over time during the development of the #NoVATonEducation campaign. The interview participants' feedback revealed that, in different situations, the activists

used various tools as their vehicles in conveying the right message at that right time to the target audience and the stakeholders. During initial offline activism, the student activists used placards, posters, and banners in the rallies and in the road marches, which were crucial to express their dissent. Those who were gifted artists utilized their talent in stirring up the excitement, using skits, street dramas, and contemporary songs that evoked the spirits of patriotism, dissent, fighting back, and rising up against the government.

This campaign was mostly visual and made up of posters, pictures of the protests, rallies, and memes during different stages of the campaign. In this activism campaign, it was visual communication that took the lead. The student leaders' explanation for this was that pictures were worth a thousand words, and the activists wanted to convey and spread the messages very quickly. Visual communication grabs attention better than a plethora of text. The availability of smartphones and the relative affordability of the internet was also a major factor in visual communication. The activists took photos and videos when they needed to convey the message quickly and spread it through social media.

It was the online communication that took the lead in spreading the messages. In the early stages, long before the government seriously proclaimed the application of VAT formally in 2015, the initiative that started with an informal announcement by the Bangladesh government regarding the first intention of issuing VAT on education eventually got cancelled after some time. The student leader who heavily participated both online and offline commented about the timing of both modes of initiation regarding the campaign:

> At that time those who were against this decision posted online and at a later stage after about a year when the government became serious and a proposal was drafted for the government's policy, only then the students also started the activism offline.

Talented cartoonists created cartoons and memes. The professional cartoonists, as well as students who were gifted artists, made original cartoons and memes in conveying memorable and witty messages that stood out and summed up ideas for contemplation. The memes resonated with the students and were widely shared. As a result, many of these went viral, including the wisecracking on the topic of the then Finance Minister's comments and approaches regarding the impending policy of VAT on education.

According to the student activists and student leaders, the pictures that went viral were, the "No VAT on Education" emblem with the red letter in the yellow background, the pictures of police attack, the resultant student injury, and pictures of bullets found inside East-West University. The video clips of police attacks on students went viral, despite some clips having no sound.

The reason why these went viral was the sudden news that students were attacked, and subsequently, the students' strong emotion, deemed a necessary reaction and confirmation that would never be paying any VAT on education. They integrated their communication by using the emblem that had the yellow background which ensured the likelihood that these communications would not result in any confusion regarding the messages and from where those were coming from.

RQ3: Role of Social Media.

The third research question inquired about the role of social media in this case of successful student activism. The police suddenly opening fire on the students opened a Pandora's box that made the government suffer some unforeseen consequences. As some of the private universities' professors recalled, the students did not create any havoc. Yet, the police force's random shooting encouraged them to actively take part in activism online as well as offline.

They used social media to upload the real-time pictures and video content of the ongoing movement. Here, social media, mainly Facebook and Facebook Messenger, played a primary role in organizing, coordinating, and mobilizing various programs amongst the student activists of different universities around many corners of Dhaka. A lot of pictures and video was cross-posted on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.

According to the interview participants, the students mobilized their offline activism campaigns via online platforms, mainly via the Facebook messenger and Facebook pages. Bangladesh had more active users on Facebook than on any other social media platform. Many used the Facebook live option to coordinate events. The student activists also communicated with each other with these tools. The student activists declared their programs online, mainly on Facebook (and Twitter to some extent) via online posters outlining the call for action (CFA), and the other activists joined them at designated places of the events following the notice. According to the interviewees, success would not have been possible without the help of social media as this huge task of coordination would not have been possible with telephone calls only. It would have been possible in the long run, without the help of social media, but not in a timely manner. The messages followed a particular hashtag showcased their offline protests by tagging their posts online. This way, streamlining those posts was easier.

The student leader activists interviewed for this study pointed out that the audience-centered approach in this campaign was the key to bringing out the success in social media usage. In this regard, one of them expressed:

> The main reason I think is, the users of Facebook who were students at that time, they
> knew how to effectively use this medium. So the student-based audiences played a prime
> role in driving the #NoVATonEducation movement via social media. They knew it was

social media which was the most appropriate medium to choose in reaching out to so many people within such a short time. It was nearly impossible for any other medium to work as effectively as social media in disseminating the messages so easily and in such a short time. Whenever someone posted a message on this platform, everyone got to be aware of it in no time at all.

He also pointed out that Facebook was the main platform in this campaign. Twitter was not much as Facebook since it was not "as versatile as Facebook" at that time. YouTube was used mainly for video uploads and dissemination of songs targeting the audience to stir-up enthusiasm for the movement. Although Instagram was used for photo posting by some, not as many students had used that platform extensively. Facebook was the main driver in this movement. Other than that, electronic communication via e-mails did not happen as much.

The leaders who were more involved in networking relied on Twitter to engage with their personal acquaintances abroad. They used this platform for lobbying and showcasing the movement to audiences overseas to influence them and thereby create indirect pressure on the government. They also trained other activists who worked jointly with them how to grab more audience attention via Twitter. For example, the training included showing them how to make proper use of hashtags in any particular messages. According to the interview participants, the information that spread outside Bangladesh helped to recruit allies in the movement, convincing the government that there was probably no winning on this issue.

Social media helped facilitate this movement once the students posted about the police-firing on the students on the roads. With this new media, vivid details could be shared instantly and be observed by many people as the contents became viral and ignited the activists' call to action even more intensely. The student activists took the lead in driving this organic movement

via social media, as the mainstream media was not making any moves for quite some time regarding the issue as most of them chose not to cover it. One particular mainstream newspaper called, *The Daily Star*, decided to cover the stories. Their social media page updated its readers 24/7 by asking the activists to interact by posting their opinions. They made use of the 360-degree perspective by not only asking student activists to participate but also letting the general public, stranded in the streets during the ongoing road blockades, have a voice by posting on that page. The team of journalists covering this campaign collected the activists' personal interviews, pictures, and video content and disseminated those via their newspaper's social media page, and within minutes, this content went viral. This resulted in the editor-in-chief giving permission for greater coverage.

Without the social media postings of the first police attacks on the East-West University (EWU) students, few private university students other than the EWU would know about the incident. It was with the dissemination of information via the new media, not only the private universities, but the people around the world also got to know about the incident and the resultant movement. The merit of social media over traditional media is that people can be more expressive and independent in exercising their freedom of speech. With mainstream or traditional media, there remains a question of censorship, whereas the activism with social media at that time did not have to face such restrictions. During the time of the movement, there were not as many restrictions on the freedom of speech, in the way it is curbed now with the Digital Security Act. During the student campaign, before the enactment of the Digital Security Act, social media was more potent than traditional media. A grassroots campaign like the #NoVATonEducation could achieve a breakthrough with this platform quite successfully. The peaceful protesters of the campaign also knew how to reach out to thousands and even millions

of people with the power of social media. The opinion leadership of some charismatic leaders, through their speech, songs, and art of storytelling, provided the required support and encouragement to the activists who fought for this cause. The use of unscripted original rap songs composed in Bengali during the time of intense protests as well as incorporating the famous songs of the national poet that spoke about nationalism and dissent were used in the offline congregations and online activism. They posted the original and adapted song contents specially created for this movement on YouTube and cross-posted them on Facebook. With the use of Twitter, the movement got international exposure.

> According to one of the student leader activists interviewed:
>
> Social media had played the main role here. First of all, everyone was centered around their respective universities, later on, when the movement became more centralized, all the students got united mainly from the point where the East-West University students suffered bullet injuries, and after that, the students from all the Universities came together to protest. If there weren't any social media, this movement would have transpired alright, but would have taken much time to take place.

He also talked about creating posters or placards and banners to display their grievances. Talking about the evolution of digital placards, aka digital posters and memes, while reflecting about this campaign, he said, "Nowadays the placards have turned into Facebook posts and memes."

Social media also played a huge role in congregating the students and mobilizing the movement. The leaders of the movement also pointed out that social media acted as a vehicle in creating awareness by disseminating and updating the information as to what was going on in the movement. Here, the mainstream media was not adequate. One of the leaders reflected:

Social media was the only avenue that was available for the student activists to

communicate to the general public about what was happening. With the help of

Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, the messages could quickly spread within and beyond

Bangladesh.

Therefore, social media here organized the students and communicated to the stakeholders

involved.

RQ4: Core Message Strategies Used.

Research question four inquired what core message strategies that were used to mobilize

this movement over time and how. The activists' posts on the social media and the other contents

pertaining to this campaign reflected how activists appealed to others in different ways, through

emotion, rationality, humor, acute need, musical appeal, etc.

The most significant message that many of the participants could remember that struck a

chord with the audience was regarding a meme involving a post for this campaign titled as, "My

Dad is not an ATM Machine/ATM Booth."The activists made good usage of affective message

strategy throughout this campaign. According to the interview participants and the student social

media activists who posted and re-shared this content on social media, many realized the

significance of their fathers' hard-earned money. Some examples of these messages are, "My

Dad is not an ATM Booth/Machine," "Does Money grow on Trees?," and "Humans are alive,

yet the Humanity isn't; if it really was, why would they (the government) ask for VAT on

education?," etc.

All these also had a significant emotional impact, according to the interview activist

participants. The students realized they should be more respectful about their parents' hard-

earned money, and it also conveyed a message to the government that if the government was

taking VAT from other sectors, that would be acceptable, yet education should be spared because education is an essential right for the citizens of the country.

The student activists also made heavy usage of a message strategy in uniquely positioning their demands by framing education as their basic right with slogans such as "This is the fight for our Basic Right!,""Stop this Farce with Education," etc. The student activists successfully positioned this right by reflecting on the situation with reasons that there were not enough tertiary public education facilities in the country. The students here referred to a cognitive message strategy via rational arguments in framing the situation. This unique positioning of their demand as their right to education appeared logical to the general public, and therefore, they were moved. Thus, people from all walks of life agreed that education was not any luxury or commodity but the citizen's basic right. The students rationally appealed to others to join the movement when asking fellow students. These calls for action were announced via posters on social media, which read, "If you don't raise your voice now, you might not have a voice later. #NoVATonEducation."These types of messages also used a tone of emotion with logic.

The student activists used music to inspire fellow activists. This appeal was used in letting the audience feel excited about the campaign through songs by national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Nazrul's music is profoundly inspirational and progressive in nature. Also, musical adaptations were made. In addition to using impromptu rap songs and other adapted music, the student activists created YouTube content based on the poet's revolutionary song "Karar Oi Louho Kopat" (Those Prison Doors of Iron) reflecting on the resolute spirit of awakening utilized in a revolution.

The student activists, cartoonists, and other gifted artists widely used humor appeal. Done with creative memes while wisecracking with using the VATman character, aka the Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith's nonsensical approaches and comments regarding the students and their family demographics, the students created contents that were out-of-the-box. These contents conveyed messages with humor that were also easier to remember.

The activists utilized the "acute need" aspect (Taylor, 1999) for urgent, specialized requirements during the campaign. Under time constraints, the informational approach using the "acute need" appeal is well-suited for a situation where the target audience would not have ample time to gather information to reach a decision. The urgent requirement for blood donations during emergencies is one example. Since it is not easy to predict when such a service may be required, brand familiarity is essential to stay on the audience's mind for them to reach a quick decision. A voluntary youth organization named Red and Green (R & G), run mainly by students, created awareness and addressed this need regarding availability.

RQ5: Other Influential Factors in the Campaign Success.

The fifth research question inquired about what other factors influenced the success of the campaign and how they were implemented. Many student social activists believed they were fighting for a crucial and legitimate cause as they thought education was their fundamental right and should not shy away from speaking, and social media like Facebook was an ideal platform. According to the interview participants and also confirmed by Business Habits (2015), 33 million users were on Facebook in Bangladesh. As the only main source in organizing the movement, social media, along with smartphones, enabled the information to easily reach the target audience (mainly the student activists) in the shortest possible time.

The interviews from the participants revealed that the middle class's connectedness to each other and their support for the activists was also a contributing factor. The movement's support network was also possible due to being located in Dhaka. Dhaka being the hub of internet connectivity where people were more tech-savvy and more connected via Facebook was also pivotal. The activists knew that it was Facebook, which was the most appropriate, effective, and efficient platform to get the attention of the Dhaka-based audience concerned and a relatively quicker source of dissemination of information to them. Even the people just outside the city were not only less tech-savvy but also had a different focus. Twitter was used only to grab the attention of the international media and liaise with an international audience to put indirect pressure on the government. The spread of information outside the country created a force of compellation, and the government also realized it probably was not wise to press this issue any further. Furthermore, the government realized that the younger generation at that time was the majority of future voters and that they should not make them irate before the upcoming election. Many private university board members who also were influential people who the political parties were supposed to be seeking support from during their election campaigns, and therefore, they should rather not make those influential people infuriated.

The spread of rumor was a crucial concern. Here, the possibility of spreading fake news was almost non-existent on social media during the time of this campaign in 2015.Since the intense movement had a short span of time, and most of the contents of this campaign were based mainly on visuals, there was not any scope for that concern.

According to the interview participants, unlike other movements like the #RoadSafety movement in Bangladesh that was foiled due to spreading of rumor, no rumors could spread during #NoVATonEducation. As this relatively peaceful campaign did not reach the onset of any

violence, and the activists were neither immature and nor hot-headed to have the inabilities to separate the right from the wrong; this resulted in less encumbrance. Any kind of relatively rougher trajectory of trials did not happen during the #NoVATonEducation or #QuotaReform movements since these movements were driven by the matured, calm, and collected University students. They were past their teenage stage and were in the more matured, adult stages as they were more grown-up individuals, who were not inclined to create any mayhem by indulging into immature, juvenile fights.

Some dedicated opinion leaders, music composers, and public speakers at the forefront in the campaign were involved. They composed music used to strike a chord with the students. Their creations conveyed emotions about the private university students' struggle in their performance of street dramas, skits, small scale street exhibitions, and unscripted songs. All these enabled the activists to drumming-up the excitement, invigorate the youthful indomitable spirits while entertaining and motivating the youngsters who were actively taking part in the campaign. The general public welcomed the stance of the student activists' peaceful movements as they also thought that their (the student activists') fight was for a just cause as there were not enough public universities in the country to cater to the increasing demand of tertiary education, and the private institutions here were trying to fill this gap.

Private university education was quite expensive in Bangladesh. The country's socioeconomic backdrop was such where the parents had to bear a lot for their children's expenses for a long time until the children became independent. Many of the parents, therefore, had to do everything possible like selling their valuable possessions and fixed assets to educate their children. On top of such an already overpriced expense, the question of bearing VAT became exorbitant. Therefore, the question of this added cost became a burning issue that the

activists had to fight against. Therefore, the intense protests and dissent started to build up. Many

students remembered that they started the remonstration from the beginning of the time the VAT

was proposed in the parliament. Many of the activists also opined that although it was

regrettable, the student activists had to go for a stronger stance against the government's

imposition of taxes on education, since if they did not block the roads, which was their only

recourse at that time, it would not come to the notice of the high-ups in the government

administration and the general public concerned. In doing so, the offline activists laid down in

the road for more visibility.sas symbolic protests to make their dissent more visible and

noteworthy. In supporting them in empathy, the general public did not bother to walk on foot

despite the inconvenience caused by the road blockades.

VI. CONCLUSION

This section introduces the deficiency in tertiary education facilities of Bangladesh and the subsequent emergence of private universities in catering to that demand. It also reflects on the aspect of student activism arising out of the government's impending policy of levying of value-added taxes on the already overpriced private university education. A discussion on the comparison between the old and new models of social activism follows. The importance of stakeholders in an activism movement is also put forward in this chapter to explain the stakeholders' importance in any social media activism campaign. This chapter highlights the key contribution of this research with an emphasis on what can be learned, which is followed by the salient aspects of this research—the big takeaways that could contribute to future research of activism. The chapter then concludes with a limitations section with suggestions for future research prospects.

Tertiary Education

The government of Bangladesh looked at the possibility of turning into a developed nation by 2041 with skilled human capital and educated citizenry (Bayes, 2019; Masud, 2015). Yet, there were not enough tertiary educational facilities in the country. The state's inability to serve the younger generation's demand of tertiary education with the obtainable existing facilities forced private universities to take the initiative and fill this infrastructural gap in the educational sector. Private university education, therefore, provided the 'Public Good!' (Masud, 2015).Public university education access was affordable but was mainly based on merit. With the Public universities' severe capacity constraints and no public funding for private universities, there were not enough scope for new aspirants/future leaders and drivers of the nation's

enterprises to seek quality education other than spending money to gain it. Figures 33 and 34 summarize some of the key findings related to tertiary education.

In 2015, the government explored the possibilities of levying value-added taxes (VAT) on private university education in the scope of expanding their revenue collection. In reality, this imposition threatened the students by shifting the burden of extra cost via taxes in the form of raising future tuition.

As there were no subsidies from the government for private universities, the implementation of this policy also reduced the possibility of providing scholarships or investments in faculty development for maintaining quality instructors. The disconnection between the government's plan for revenue collection and the actual purpose of private universities gave rise to turmoil in the country's education sector. The private universities were non-profit institutions by law and the imposition of value-added taxes on education was an undemocratic public policy. With no way to shoulder the excess burden of VAT, the students resorted to a nonviolent social movement against this impending policy.

Tertiary Education

Access to Tertiary Education	Exclusion to Tertiary Education
Not enough infrastructure/ facilities	Exclusivity to only those who can pay
Subsidized	No Subsidy

Figure 33: Tertiary Education

Public vs. Private

Public University	Private University
Merit Based	Not as Competitive
Accommodation Constraint	Exorbitant
Tough Competition; Very Affordable	Access available to those who can Afford
Most Sought-After	Depends Upon University Repute and Placement
Most graduates are well placed	Excellent Performers are well established

Figure 34: Public vs. Private University

Student Activism

The Bengali students of East Pakistan rose and challenged the ruling West Pakistan in 1947 and experienced bloodshed in 1952 to attain the acknowledgment of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. The idea of activism is now considerably less troublesome than in the past, thanks to the information, correspondence, and innovations and the social web technologies. All these have transformed how individuals cooperate and share data. Social networking communication sites like Facebook, Twitter, and content sharing destinations like YouTube and Instagram now are the stages for contemporary activism (Kallevig, 2014; Rose, 2017). The e-informal exchange can be created without much of a stretch or hassle. Recordings, pictures, and stories can gain traction in no time, and viral sharing can spread the idea for a cause promptly. Through online social platforms, the activists assume a critical job in building,

connecting, impacting messages, and influencing political behavior and social engagement. Not only can key social networking platforms like Facebook or Twitter help create the participatory, collaborative, user-generated shared content (UGC), but also cutting-edge camera phones that allow snapshots on the move also come into play (Hjorth &Hendry, 2015). The case of #NoVATonEducation depicts how the younger generation's activism in Bangladesh disseminated information for a change that replaced conventional tools, addressed how these youth used social media as a facilitator in activism, recruited others for a greater change, and ultimately became successful in finally reaching a breakthrough via citizens' access to communication tools, digital and non-digital activism (offline protests), and leadership.

Bangladesh students sought out social media, particularly Facebook, which they found as the most appropriate platform for engagement on the issue. Facebook also became a suitable planning tool for offline engagement, coordination, and mobilization for a concerted effort for the movement #NoVATonEducation (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009).With their social media messages, students sought people's attention in conveying their stance that education was one of their basic rights.

The existing exorbitant costs private tertiary education meant most of the middle and lower middle-class families pay high fees. Therefore, paying VAT on top of the existing fees caused concern and impelled their children take up a proactive standpoint in speaking their dissent by initiating #NoVATonEducation online and offline. The activists firmly proclaimed they were against the government's commoditizing education. Thanks to social media, the call for action was a resounding success. The activists at the forefront quickly conceived an emblem for the campaign and integrated that with all of their communication.

Table 4: Old and New Models of Social Activism

Model	Comparison between Social Activism Models
Social Activism: Old Model	• Authoritarian lawmakers (public figures most interested in their private gain) create institutions/practices that are exclusionary (Exclusion) • Authoritarian values upheld by the media that have no way to fund their operations outside of government support (Values) • Any attempts by citizens to protest are met with violence from law enforcement (Control)
Social Activism: New Model	• Lawmakers fund public education but attempt to profit from private education (tension of public/private) • Public universities admit only top-tier students, leaving others to pay for private education (limited access and exclusion) • "Value-added" tax positions education as a commodity – inconsistent with public perception of the value of education (tension of value/commoditization) • Students use accessible social media to call attention to the hardships private education already places on their families, to spread messages opposing the new tax, and to provide tools for organizing peaceful resistance (lack of central control/controlled chaos) • Institutions (universities, mainstream media) and citizens support student movement because they can see it is widespread (social media makes values visible and places emphasis on access over exclusion) • Broad public pressure calls for restoring order by rescinding tax rather than trying to stop protests with bloody (violent) law enforcement.

They resorted to applying emotion, rationality, humor, acute need, and musical appeal as core message strategies in communication on social media, in addition to keeping abreast of updates from traditional media outlets and exchanging news. Notwithstanding, the activism on social media and the student demonstrations in the form of protests on the roads were also a crucial element of this campaign.

The activists initially used traditional banners, placards, and posters with slogans like "Education is not a Product,""No VAT on Education,""Why Firing on Students?," etc. On social media— mainly on Facebook—the activists uploaded photos, videos of #NoVATonEducation updates, and creative memes for wisecracking pertaining to this issue. Facebook Live was fully utilized during this campaign. Twitter users mainly focused on disseminating news, updates, posters, announcements, calls for action, and for attracting international attention and lobbying. YouTube videos were recorded during the protests and the student activists uploaded them once they reached home. A lot of cross-posting helped. Social media acted as the lifeblood of this campaign. Most of the tech-savvy students in the capital city Dhaka had smartphones that allowed them to make this content while they campaigned for the cause. Smartphone was a useful digital device for their internal coordination and mobilization of the events purposes, too!

The students' accessibility to mobile devices and the affordability of the internet were pivotal ingredients for this successful campaign. The activists' astuteness in selecting the most appropriate platform, namely Facebook, was a crucial decision in disseminating the audience-centric messages for this campaign. The Dhaka city-dwellers' savoir-faire in using Facebook rightly catered to reaching out the messages to the right audience—the middle-class in Dhaka—at the right time also facilitated greater engagement. Twitter was used to create indirect pressure on the government from international media. Many of the activists also added revolutionary

music to the videos that added zest and emotion to the events. The artists composed songs specially dedicated for this campaign that spoke about the students' struggles.

Many of the activists with art and graphical talents made witty cartoons and memes that were a valuable addition to this movement, which kept audiences updated and engaged thoroughly. Here, social media's role compensated for the absence of the mainstream media in keeping up with the stories/happenings in this campaign. The stakeholders in this campaign, mainly student activists, non-student activists/general public, and to some extent, professors posted mainly on Facebook regarding their stance and engaged with the audience there. The activists with international connections used Twitter.

Stakeholders

As illustrated in Figure 35, the #NoVATonEducation social media campaign reached many different stakeholders. At the top of the list of stakeholders were the individuals and organizations that conceived of the VAT and considered the public impact of its imposition. In the middle of the list, the primary locus of activism centered around the universities and the students and families who were served by those institutions. But as the movement spread to the streets, other institutions became engaged in trying to control; report on, and understand the protests.

The citizens' and students' families, who followed this campaign closely, shared their views with each other on social media. The topics discussed during this campaign began with the student-police clash on the EWU campus in early September, 2015, followed by the Finance Minister ruling out the withdrawal of VAT, as well as the stories of subsequent student road blockades in different prime locations despite the government clarifications.

Stakeholders
• Law makers/Government
• Judicial Body (e.g. High Court)
• Universities and their Employees
• University Governing Body
• Students and their Families
• Law Enforcers
• Journalists
• General Citizens

Figure 35: Stakeholders of #NoVATonEducation

The story of students hacking the country's prime public university (University of Dhaka) website as a symbolic protest also spread to multiple stakeholders.

Campaign Summary

One of the key drivers for the #NoVATonEducation activism campaign was the disconnection between the government's assumption/perception and the reality. The government surmised that only rich people send their children to private universities. However, the government did not rightly assess the demographic distribution that the middle class and lower middle-class families also try to afford private university education. The government's VAT imposition assumed that the members of the boards of trustees of the private universities were profiteering and the government also wanted to explore avenues for revenue collection.

The government's mission is to turn Bangladesh into a developed nation by 2041 with skilled human capital and educated citizenry. These private universities were not subsidized, and thus needed to channel the money gained back into infrastructural development. Furthermore, the government's treating education as a commodity was contradictory to their existing educational policy.

After four months of relentless protests, the country's National Board of Revenue (NBR) explained it was the private university authorities and not the students who will be paying the value-added taxes on education. This increased the tension further as the NBR did not clarify why the government had to make a fresh announcement of VAT if it (as they claimed) was already assumed in the existing tuition fees. This again was a questionable directive as the basic idea of VAT is that it is realized by the final consumer. It was also questionable how the government was to ensure that the universities would not pass the burden eventually to students via enhanced fees and that the university authorities would pay the dues from their coffers/reserves.

There was a preconceived notion that the private University students were spoon-fed ('Farm Chickens') and therefore, inefficient; whereas, many private university graduates outperformed the public university graduates in the real world. The student activists also had a point to prove. The impending policy failed as it was not a well-thought-out decision. The activism was well received by the society in general since the decision-makers ignored the assessment of the likely outcome and could not feel the pulse of the stakeholders involved.

There were some unique factors that helped make this campaign a success. Social activism in Southeast Asia against government pressure, particularly on the Indian subcontinent, usually results either in oppression or in violent protests (riots, destructions, arson, vandalism, etc.). This time was totally different. The activism was disruptive, yet totally non-violent. This was a peaceful demonstration of matured and creative adults—who managed to prove transversal politics was possible with their logical, coherent, consistent demands, and that unity is achievable among different tertiary educational institutes. Unlike public varsities, student politics (associated to the mainstream political parties) was never allowed; thus, with zero political

backing, the students were wired and oriented differently. So, the question of creating violence or coercion did not occur naturally to them. Yet, they felt they had no way but to paralyze the entire city as they decided that, without blockades, they would not be able to grab people's attention.

Activists stood up against the injustice of police firing into the crowd by coordinating with their compatriots via social media and constructively criticizing the government policy but not the state. The student activists convinced their educational institutions of their capability and responsibility. They apologized for shutting down the city and this temporary inconvenience, and they did not let any politicians meddle into their movement fearing the politicians could foil the cause by riding its coat tails.

The public generally go against road blockades where the city dwellers suffered immensely as thousands of student protesters' demonstration caused colossal traffic tangle. But in this movement, they did not go against the students. The general public gleefully endured untold sufferings of the congested traffic when commuting in the capital for days together. They empathized with the activists' logic and believed it was a legitimate cause and that education was an important foundation for the society.

Creativity was aptly utilized in this movement. The gifted students and opinion leaders in the platform utilized their talents in composing songs (impromptu raps, adaptation of revolutionary songs) that spoke about unity, strength, patriotism, and bravery, and street paintings as well as memes (both weighty and witty using cartoons and photo contents). Many of these cartoons displayed the VATman character (Finance Minister Muhith), pointing out his comments regarding the lifestyle and demographic makeup of private university students/families and the irrationality of VAT on education. The campaign also followed a theme

that reflected the protagonist Himu for this campaign. The capital city's tech-savvier generation's posting of real-time continuous updates on social media while using Facebook Live contributed to the movement's success. The student activists also weaved in various appeals in messages to portray their concerns, their frustrations, and their financial struggle with emotional messages such as "My Dad is Not an ATM!"In addition to middle-class sentiment of people, the public pressure, and the situational influences had to play a major part in this campaign. Students vowed to continue the protests until their demands were met. They crossed a point of no return once the government was unlikely to waver from its initial stance. Once reason did not work; they had to apply the tactic of pressure by making the entire capital city come to a standstill. The government had an upcoming election and did not want to lose votes from the country's youngsters, comprising a considerable portion of voters. In the face of the activists' unyielding protests that turned the capital city to a nonfunctional metropolis, the government ultimately gave in to the students' demands. The government also did not want to irritate university board members who were influential sponsors of the election campaign.

Implications for Activism

This case study, #NoVATonEducation, in a developing country in Southeast Asia, delineates how hashtag activism can play a crucial role in informing and inspiring others to take action by joining a cause. This investigation showcases how non-violent activism that combines traditional offline protests with social media can lead to the desired change in public policy. Future mass communication researchers and social activists will be able to build on this research to further explore the role of offline communication tools, social media tactics, creative strategies, and other factors (such as effective leadership)in social activism campaigns.

Each of the research questions in this study helps to inform the understanding and development of successful social activism campaigns that are supported by social media. Research question one focused on exploring how the campaign developed over time. It is critical to understand the historical context in which a campaign takes place. This campaign began with a legislative proposal that was met with opposition from the young adults who were most likely to be negatively impacted by the proposal. Initial protests were loosely organized, but two factors helped the campaign to take shape. The first was the development of a hashtag, #NoVATonEducation, which provided an organizing framework on social media. The second was police attacks on peaceful protestors. The students turned to the police in peace and took pictures of students giving flowers to them. The broad sharing of these images of protests that was able to remain mostly peaceful while still causing major disruption and helped to shape public opinion. Future researchers need to understand not only the historical context, but also these pivotal points as they study the effectiveness of activist movements. In particular, the intersection of social media and offline activism should be carefully examined. Organizers also need to understand the historical significance and build campaigns that use social media as an organizing tool while also applying pressure for change in the real world.

The second research question delved deeper into the tools used by the activists. The #NoVATonEducation campaign utilized a broad range of tools from traditional placards and posters to memes and videos to spread their message. They built on historical traditions such as songs and street dramas that were familiar to their audience. The online and offline messages were well-integrated. Memes that appeared online were translated into posters used at the protest and vice-versa. Not only was the hashtag a unifying element, but the campaign also used color and slogans to unify their message. The concept of integrated marketing communication is well

established in the academic literature, but additional research focused specifically on integration in the context of social media and social activism is needed. Hashtags have been used as unifying elements in global campaigns, such as the #MeToo movement. The focus on color as a campaign element was evident in the "Blackout Tuesday" movement, in which some social media users posted a black square to protest police brutality against black people. Future researchers and activists can learn from this case study about how to use online and offline tools to most effectively achieve their goals.

The third research question focused specifically on how the #NoVATonEducation campaign used social media. Targeting the right audience and keeping in mind their access to devices and platforms is pivotal in activism. The activist's geared the messages to the right audience at the right time, smartly using the right platform where they knew they would be able to get the right kind of followers. Facebook was prevalent and versatile. Therefore, they could use this platform in vividly describing what they wanted by intelligently posting memorable photo content (posters and memes) that spoke to their demands, struggles, and call for action regarding various events. One notable factor in this campaign was that students used visual content heavily. The activists perceived that text-heavy content would bore their audience, not draw quick attention, and not elicit any desirable response.

At the time of the campaign, the activists knew that the students were comfortable on Facebook, and therefore, they used this particular platform to put forward their concerns and upload their content using the hashtag. The Dhaka audience at that time did not regularly use Twitter, and therefore, the leaders used Twitter only to disseminate the news and to get foreign backing for this campaign. Facebook Live and video streaming were utilized fully so that the students from different parts of the city could join the offline activism promptly by getting the

information regarding the location of the events. Future research needs to focus on identifying which audiences use which tools and techniques and how they resonate with audiences. Because social media evolves rapidly, it is important to monitor social media use among audiences continually and to understand the local context. This type of practical research can also be of use to organizers who are planning social action.

The fourth research question focused on message strategies. The audience-centric approach in the messages is the key to success. As the activists considered their audiences, they knew that emotional appeals would be stronger than rational appeals, despite the fact that they were protesting legislative policy. They did occasionally use rational appeals to point out the illogical components of the proposed legislation, but the bulk of their messages used humor. References to previous revolutions through music and literature were also powerful strategies. Future academic research could more explicitly compare successful and unsuccessful social activism campaigns to determine the role of message strategy in campaign success. Such research could be of great value to activists who are organizing future campaigns.

The final research question sought to understand other kinds of factors that may have influenced the success of the #NoVATonEducation campaign. One of the key lessons shared by participants was that, because the campaign mainly was based on visuals (pictures, real-time video contents, etc.), there was less potential for disinformation about the campaign. Video devices on smartphones capture real life footage of incidents on location. These smartphone cameras are important and a beneficial apparatus as tools for preserving evidence, and the contents captured an authentic record for resolving any disputes or refuting any scandalous claims or rumors in high-traffic public events. Although security and concerns for privacy invasions are involved in recording live footage, these types of informal surveillance could be

worthy resources to record impromptu demonstrations that can serve as valuable pieces of evidence against any unfounded gossip. Future research could examine in more detail the impact of video recordings in social activism campaigns such as #NoVATonEducation and #BlackLivesMatter. What have been the successes of such video use? What have been the challenges? How might those experiences inform future social activism campaigns?

Limitations of the Study.

This research brought in the Southeast Asian perspective of activism in creating a desirable change in public opinion and the resultant policy reform as the aftereffect of widespread dissension. The scope of this study could include the perspective of the government officials regarding this campaign but the researcher realized that the government officials were not completely or heavily involved in this campaign as this was basically a student protest campaign backed up by public support. Therefore, the government officials' perspective was kept away from the scope of this study. As the mainstream media's involvement in this campaign was almost non-existent, this research could analyze the topics discussed by only a few English newspapers. The video news clips also were limited as the news channels only started to cover the story during the stalemate of the entire capital during the campaign when the students blocked the roads. Future studies could focus on international news media coverage on this activism campaign by including relevant news stories in the scope of the research.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, S. (2015, September 11). Government clarification kicks up more dust amid cry for

    education VAT rollback. Retrieved from

    https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/11/government-clarification-kicks-up-more-

    dust-amid-cry-for-education-vat-rollback

Admin. (2017). Take a stand against poverty in Cleveland. #SpeakUpCLE – Fun web. Retrieved

    from http://www.thecicc.com/video/AGZaN4Qamd8.html

Ahamed, S. (2015,November 24). Internet data use in Bangladesh slumps after govt. blocks

    Facebook, other apps. Retrieved from

    https://bdnews24.com/business/2015/11/24/internet-data-use-in-bangladesh-slumps-after-

    govt-blocks-facebook-other-apps

Ahmed, A. (2013, February 6). Protesters demand death for Bangladesh war crimes Islamist.

    Reuters. Retrieved from https://in.reuters.com/article/bangladesh-verdict-war/protesters-

    demand-death-for-bangladesh-war-crimes-islamist-idINDEE9150CS20130206

Ahsan, S. B. (2004, December 17). Nostalgia 1971: Our songs, our war. Retrieved from

    https://groups.google.com/forum/#!topic/soc.culture.bangladesh/TZHzKZn6JQM

Al-Helal, B. (2003). *Bhasha Andoloner Itihas (History of the Language Movement)*. Agamee

    Prakashani, Dhaka.

Al-Helal, B. (2012). Language Movement. In Islam, S., Jamal, A. A. (Eds.), *Banglapedia:*

    National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh (2nd ed.). Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

American Press Institute (2015, March 16). Millennials are not newsless, uninterested, or

    disengaged. Retrieved from

    https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/millennials-

    not-newsless/

Andrews (2017, March 4). Why social media is here to stay. Retrieved from

https://studybreaks.com/2017/03/04/social-media-activism/

Anthony, S. & Jack, S. (2009). Qualitative case study methodology in nursing research: An

integrative review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *65*(6), 1171-1181. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-

2648.2009.04998.x

Arnett, J., Žukauskienė, R., & Sugimura, K. (2014). *The new life stage of emerging adulthood at*

ages 18-29 years: Implications for mental health (Vol. 1). https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-

0366(14)00080-7

Banglanews24.com (2015, August 4). Writ filed seeking stay of VAT on private varsities.

Retrieved from https://wap.banglanews24.com/articles/43961/p

Banglapedia (2015). The war of liberation. Retrieved from

http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=War_of_Liberation,_The

Banglapedia. (n.d.). Language Movement. Retrieved from

http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Language_Movement

Bayes, A. (2019, September 6). Vision 2041: Institution matters. Retrieved from

https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/vision-2041-institution-matters-1567786054

Bock, J. G. (2012). *The technology of nonviolence: Social media and nonviolence prevention.*

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

BBC Asia (2011, December16). Bangladesh war: The article that changed history – Asia.

Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16207201

BDNews24.com (2015, June 4). Budget proposes to levy VAT on private universities, medical

    and engineering colleges. Retrieved from

    https://bdnews24.com/economy/2015/06/04/budget-proposes-to-levy-vat-on-private-

    universities-medical-and-engineering-colleges

BDNews24.com (2015, August 9). High Court issues rule over VAT on tuition fees of private

    universities. Retrieved from bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/08/09/high-court-issues-

    rule-over-vat-on-tuition-fees-of-private-universities

BDNews24.com (2015, September 9). 20 injured in students-police clash in Dhaka's Rampura.

    Retrieved from https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/09/20-injured-in-students-

    police-clash-in-dhakas-rampura

BDNews24.com (2015, September 9). Students protesting VAT on private universities lift block

    on Rampura street. Retrieved from bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/09/students-

    protesting-vat-on-private-universities-lift-block-on-rampura-street

BDNews24.com (2015, September 10). Private university students in Dhaka protest VAT on

    tuition fees. Retrieved frombdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/10/private-university-

    students-in-dhaka-protest-vat-on-tuition-fees

BDNews24.com (2015, September 10). Cracks show among students protesting VAT on tuition

    fees after NBR clarification. Retrieved from

    bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/10/cracks-show-among-students-protesting-vat-on-

    tuition-fees-after-nbr-clarification

BDNews24.com (2015, September 11). Police charge baton to clear last remaining student

    agitators from streets. Retrieved from

    https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/11/police-charge-baton-to-clear-last-

    remaining-student-agitators-from-streets;.pre26

BDNews24.com (2015, September 11). Private university authorities, not students, will pay

    VAT, PM Hasina says. Retrieved from bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/11/private-

    university-authorities-not-students-will-pay-vat-pm-hasina-says

BDNews24.com (2015, September 14). Finance Minister Muhith rules out rollback of VAT

    imposed on private universities. Retrieved from

    https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/08/14/finance-minister-muhith-rules-out-

    rollback-of-vat-imposed-on-private-universities

BDNews24.com (2015, September 14). VAT on private universities won't be reduced: Muhith.

    Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/country/vat-pvt-universities-

    won%E2%80%99t-be-reduced-muhith-126895

BDNews24.com (2015, September 14). Private varsity students continue anti VAT agitations on

    streets. Retrieved from bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/14/private-varsity-students-

    continue-anti-vat-agitations-on-streets

BDNews24.com (2015, September 14). Government withdraws 7.5 percent VAT on private

    university tuition fees. Retrieved from

    https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/14/government-withdraws-7.5-percent-vat-

    on-private-university-tuition-fees

BDNews24.com (2015, September 14). Protesting students cheer up at news of VAT withdrawal. Retrieved from https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/14/protesting-students-cheer-up-at-news-of-vat-withdrawal

BDNews24.com (2015, September 15). VAT withdrawn to avoid students' education cost hike: NBR. Retrieved from https://bdnews24.com/economy/2015/09/15/vat-withdrawn-to-avoid-students-education-cost-hike-nbr

Beloit College (n.d.). The mindset list: Class of 2017 list. Retrieved from https://www.beloit.edu/mindset/previouslists/2017/

Bennett, S., Maton, K., & Kervin, L. (2008). The "digital natives" debate: A critical review of the evidence. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *39*(5), 775–786. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2007.00793.x

Bennett, W. L. (2008). Changing citizenship in the digital age. *Civic life online: Learning how digital media can engage youth*. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation series on digital media and learning. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. 1–24. doi: 10.1162/dmal.9780262524827.001

Bennett, W. L., &Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action. *Information, Communication & Society*, *15*(5), 739–768. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661

Berlyne, J. & Cant, C. (2015, September 18). 5 Student Strikes That Show How Students Can Win. Retrieved from https://novaramedia.com/2015/09/18/5-student-strikes-that-show-how-students-can-win/

Betlemidze, M. (2016). Neoliberalism and against-the-grain activism in the age of new media. *New Media & Society*, *18*(5), 878–883. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815626911

Bhuiyan, A. S. A. (2015, August 25). Social media, freedom of expression and the ICT act. Retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/politics/social-media-freedom-expression-and-the-ict-act-131878

Bhattacharjee, P. P. (2015, September 15). What prompted govt. to review VAT decision, *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/what-prompted-govt-review-vat-decision-143443

Biezen, V., Mair, P. & Poguntke, T. (2012). The decline of membership-based politics. *Party Politics, 20*(2), 205-216.

Boudreau, V. (2004). *Resisting dictatorship: Repression and protest in Southeast Asia.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bonilla, Y., & Rosa, J. (2015). #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist*, *42*(1), 1548-1425. https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12112.

Bosch, T. (2017). Twitter activism and youth in South Africa: The case of #RhodesMustFall. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(2), 221–232. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1162829

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*. *3*(2). 77-101. Retrieved from http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735

Brickman, L. (2017, Apr 18). 3 Ways To Win At Social Media Activism. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurabrickman/2017/04/18/three-commandments-for-online-activism/#1cf21bbf427f

Bromley, D. B. (1990). Academic contributions to psychological counseling: I. A philosophy of science for the study of individual cases. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, *3*(3), 299-307.

Brown, L. (2008). A review of the literature on case study research. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, *1*(1), 1-13.

Brown, M., Ray, R., Summers, E. & Fraistat, N. (2017). #SayHerName: A case study of intersectional social media activism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *40*(11), 1831-1846.

Business Habit (2015, October 11). The number of Facebook users in Bangladesh. Retrieved from https://www.businesshabit.com/2015/10/the-number-of-facebook-users-in.html

Campbell, J., & Watts, W. (1760). Memoirs of the revolution in Bengal, Anno Domini 1757. Retrieved January 12, 2018, from https://www.wdl.org/en/item/2384/

Caraway, T. L. (2006). Political openness and transnational activism: Comparative insights from labor activism. *Politics & Society,34*(2), 277-304.

Chaffee, S. H. & Metzger, M. J. (2001). The end of mass communication? *Mass Communication and Society 4*(4), 365-379.

Chaity, A. J. (2017, February 21). Abul Barkat museum keeps language movement going. Retrieved from http://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2017/02/21/abul-barkat-museum-keeps-language-movement-going/

Chandra, B. (1989). *India's struggle for independence, 1857-1947 (Repr. ed.).* New Delhi, India: Penguin Books.

Chowdhury, A. R., Housna, A. & Shams, S. A. (2016, January 1). Why 2015 was a good year for Bangladesh. Retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/country/why-2015-was-good-year-bangladesh-195472

Ciszek, E. I. (2016). Digital activism: How social media and dissensus inform theory and practice. *Public Relations Review,42*(2). 314-321.

Coca, N. (2018, January 19). From Myanmar to Indonesia, governments are clamping down on the internet and social media. Retrieved from https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-rapid-rise-of-censorship-in-southeast-asia/

Cogan, C. & Sharpe, G. (1986). *Planning analysis: The theory of citizen participation.* University of Oregon. wwww.uor egon.edu/~rgp/PPPM613/class10theory.htm

Colhoun, D. (2015, December 2). Social media censorship in Bangladesh hints at long-term problems for publishers. Retrieved from https://www.cjr.org/analysis/bangladesh_social_media.php

Cresci, E. (2014, May 26). #YesAllWomen: How Twitter reacted to the shootings in California. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/may/26/yesallwomen-how-twitter-reacted-to-the-shootings-in-california

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Plano, C., Vicki, L. & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *35*(2), 236-264. doi: 10.1177/0011000006287390

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cumbow, V. (2011, March 30). Everything posted online is there forever, even after it's been deleted. Retrieved from http://blog.al.com/breaking/2011/03/everything_posted_online_is_th.html

Davis, J. (2011, October 27). Cause marketing: Moving beyond corporate slacktivism. Retrieved from http://evidencebasedmarketing.net/cause-marketing-moving-beyond-corporate-slacktivism

Denyer, S. (2016, June 14). Internet activists are finding ways around China's Great Firewall. *The Washington Post.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/the-cat-and-mouse-game-between-chinas-censors-and-internet-activists/2016/06/14/77f2b3a8-1dd9-11e6-b6e0-c53b7ef63b45_story.html?utm_term=.aa03b237a5a4

Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0.*Journal of Mixed Method Research*, *6(*2), pp. 80-88.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzedn and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.). London: Sage, pp. 1-19.

Desreumaux, G. (2014,May 27). Meal for share – Instagram against poverty. Retrieved from http://wersm.com/meal-for-share-instagram-against-poverty/

Dreier, P. (2013, October 28). 19 activists who are changing America. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/progressive-activists_b_4171399.html

DeSario, J. & Langton, S.(1987). *Citizen participation in public decision making*. New York: NY: Greenwood Press.

Diehl, C. (2015, April 29). Harvard poll finds Millennials have little faith in government, media. Retrieved from https://www.usatoday.com/story/college/2015/04/29/harvard-poll-finds-millennials-have-little-faith-in-government-media/37402403/

DPMC (2017, 16 August). Public participation. Retrieved from https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/policy-methods-toolbox/public-participation

Dummett, M. (2011, December 16). Bangladesh war: The article that changed history. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16207201

Echelon Insights (2016, April 22). How social sharing is reshaping the 2016 race: Key takeaways from our research for BuzzFeed. Retrieved from https://medium.com/echelon-indicators/how-social-sharing-is-reshaping-the-2016-race-key-takeaways-from-our-research-for-buzzfeed-df008cbdc313Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d.). Flag of Bangladesh. Retrieved January 6, 2018, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/flag-of-Bangladesh

Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. *Academy of Management Review*, *14*(4), 532-550.

Feagin, J., Orum, A., &Sjoberg, G. (1991). *A case for case study*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Fieldhouse, E., Tranmer, M., & Russell, A. (2007). Something about young people or something about elections? Electoral participation of young people in Europe: Evidence from a multilevel analysis of the European Social Survey. *European Journal of Political Research*, *46*(6), 797–822. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2007.00713.x

Flyvbjerg, B.(2011). Case study. In Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp.301-316). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ford, L. (2015, March 19). Women's rights activists use social media to get their message out. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/mar/19/womens-rights-social-media-get-their-message-out

Fox News (2014, June 23). Nigeria says 219 girls in Boko Haram kidnapping still missing [Text.Article]. Retrieved from http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/06/23/nigeria-says-21-girls-in-boko-haram-kidnapping-still-missing.html

Freezel, J. T. (2018). Agenda setting through social media: The importance of incidental news exposure and social filtering in the digital era. *Political Research Quarterly, 71(2),* 482-494.

Fromm, J. (2016, June 22). New study finds social media shapes millennial political involvement and engagement. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jefffromm/2016/06/22/new-study-finds-social-media-shapes-millennial-political-involvement-and-engagement/

Fry, R. (2018, April 11). Millennials are the largest generation in the U.S. labor force. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/11/millennials-largest-generation-us-labor-force/

Funk, A. (2019, November 26). Internet freedom in Asia hits unprecedented low. Retrieved from https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/internet-freedom-in-asia-hits-unprecedented-low/

Gerbaudo, P. (2012). *Tweets and the streets: Social media and contemporary activism.* London: Pluto Press.

Gottfried J. &Shearer E. (2016). News use across social media platforms 2016. *Pew Research Center.*http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms2016/

Gabriel, D. (2013, March 17). Inductive and deductive approaches to research. Retrieved from http://deborahgabriel.com/2013/03/17/inductive-and-deductive-approaches-to-research/

Gagnier, C. M. (2008). Democracy 2.0: Millennial-generated change to American governance. *National Civic Review*, *97*, 32-36.doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ncr.222

Gallant, R. (2016, July 20). *Foundation partners in #SpeakUpCLE campaign against poverty*. Retrieved from http://socfcleveland.org/foundations-partners-on-social-media-campaign-against-poverty-speakupcle/

George, A. L. & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case studies and theory development in the social sciences* (4th ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review*, *98*(2), 341-354. doi:10.1017/S0003055404001182

Gladwell, M. (2010). Small change. *The New Yorker*, *4*, 42-49.

Glaser, Barney G. & Strauss, Anselm L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. New York: Aldine Pub. Co.

Glassie, H. & Mahmud, F. (2008).Living Traditions. Cultural survey of Bangladesh series-II. Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Dhaka. International Mother Language Day.

Global Nonviolent Action Database (n.d.). Bangladeshis bring down Ershad regime, 1987-1990. Retrieved from https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/

Gorry, G. A., & Westbrook, R. A. (2009). Winning the internet confidence game. *Corporate Reputation Review*, *12*(3), 195–203.

Gottfried, J. & Barthel, M. (2015, June 1). How millennials' political news habits differ from those of gen xers and baby boomers. Retrieved from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/01/political-news-habits-by-generation/

Gamson W. A. (1992). *Talking Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Gamson, W. A. (1992). *The social psychology of collective action.* In A. D. Morris & C. M. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in social movement theory* (p. 53–76). Yale University Press.

Grant, A. (2016). "#discrimination:" The online response to a case of a breastfeeding mother being ejected from a UK retail premises. *Journal of Human Lactation*, *32*(1), 141–151. https://doi.org/10.1177/0890334415592403

Greenslade, R. (2015, July 22). How the different generations consume their daily news... Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2015/jul/22/how-the-different-generations-consume-their-daily-news

Greenslade, R. (2015, July 22). How the different generations consume their daily news... Retrieved February 2, 2018, from http://www.theguardian.com/media/greenslade/2015/jul/22/how-the-different-generations-consume-their-daily-news

Guo, C., & Saxton, G. D. (2014). Tweeting social change: How social media are changing nonprofit advocacy. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *43*(1), 57- 79. doi: 10.1177/0899764012471585

Habib, D. M. A. (2013, October 21). In the age of citizen journalism and social media does Gramsci's theory of hegemonic functions of the media still hold true? Dewan Mohammad Ahsan Habib. Retrieved from https://ahsanthehabib.wordpress.com/category/in-the-age-of-citizen-journalism-and-social-media-does-gramscis-theory-of-hegemonic-functions-of-the-media-still-hold-true/

Harlow, S. &Johnson, T.J. (2011). Overthrowing the protest paradigm? How the New York Times, global voices and Twitter covered the Egyptian revolution. *International Journal of Communication*, *5*, 1359-1374.

Harvey, K. (2014). *Encyclopedia of social media and politics.* SAGE. Retrieved from

    https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/encyclopedia-of-social-media-and-

    politics/book239101

Hjorth, L., & Hendry, N. (2015). A snapshot of social media: Camera phone practices. *Social

    media + society*, *1*(1), 2056305115580478. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115580478

Homegrown (2013, November 10). India's five most creative campaigns to end violence against

    women. Retrieved from https://homegrown.co.in/article/2936/indias-five-most-creative-

    campaigns-to-end-violence-against-women

Hussain, A. (2015, September 17). Clear as mud #NoVATonEducation. Retrieved from

    https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/novatoneducation-144142

Ingham, C. (2006). *The rough guide to the Beatles* (2nd ed.). London: Rough Guides/Penguin.

International Gas Report (2005). Blast/fire hits gas field. New York: January, No. 515, 18.

Islam, A. (2015, November 20). Internet users defy Facebook ban in Bangladesh. Retrieved from

    https://www.dw.com/en/internet-users-defy-facebook-ban-in-bangladesh/a-18863635

ISSSUU (2014, August 7). UNDP youth and democratic citizenship in East and Southeast Asia.

    Retrieved from https://issuu.com/undp/docs/rbap-dg-2014-youth-n-democratic-cit

Jane, E. A. (2017). 'Dude … stop the spread': Antagonism, agonism, and #manspreading on

    social media. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *20*(5), 459–475.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877916637151

Jenkins, H., Shresthova, S., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., & Zimmerman, A.

    (2016). *By any media necessary: The new youth activism*. New York: NYU Press.

Jillani, S. (2011, December 13). Scars of Bangladesh independence war 40 years on. Retrieved

    from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16111843

Jobin-Leeds, G., & AgitArte (2016). *When we fight, we win: Twenty-first century social movements and the activists that are transforming our world* (1st ed.). New York, NY: The New Press.

Johansson, R. (2003). Methodologies in Housing Research. Retrieved fromhttp://www.psyking.net/htmlobj-3839/case_study_methodology-_rolf_johansson_ver_2.pdf

Kallevig, H. (2014, November 2). How social media has changed activism – A look at the benefits of online collective activism. Retrieved from http://heatherkallevig.com/how-social-media-has-changed-activism-a-look-at-the-benefits-of-online-collective-activism/

Kanter, B., & Fine, A. (2010). *The networked nonprofit: Connecting with social media to drive change*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Karim, E. (2015, December 4). The power of social media. Retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/star-weekend/spotlight/the-power-social-media-181789

Katz, E. &Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal influence.* Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Kelley, P. (2013, November 26). What drives success in digital activism? Retrieved from hxttps://www.futurity.org/drives-digital-activism-success/

Kessler, S. (2010). The case for social media in the schools. Retrieved from http://mashable.com/2010/09/29/social-media-in-school/

Kreiken, W. (2019). The state of the art of public participation in Europe. Retrieved from http://www.coastalwiki.org/wiki/The_state_of_the_art_of_public_participation_in_Europe

Khan-Ibarra, S. (2014, October 30). The case for social media and hashtag activism. Retrieved

    from http://www.patheos.com/blogs/altmuslim/2014/10/the-case-for-social-media-and-

    hashtag-activism/

Khomami, N. (2017, October 20). #MeToo: how a hashtag became a rallying cry against sexual

    harassment. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from

    http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/20/women-worldwide-use-hashtag-metoo-

    against-sexual-harassment

Lal, V. (n.d.). Manas: History and politics. Retrieved from

    https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/British/EAco.html

Lambert, R. D. (1959). Factors in Bengali regionalism in Pakistan. *Far Eastern Survey*, *28* (4),

    49–58.

Lambert, J. (2008). *Digital storytelling: Capturing lives*, *creating community*. Berkeley, CA:

    Life on the Water Inc.

Latin American Herald Tribune (2020, July 19). Bangladesh journalists protest propaganda law

    with human chain. Retrieved from

    http://www.laht.com/article.asp?CategoryId=12395&ArticleId=2467356

Liou, C. (2013). Partners for prevention. Retrieved from

    http://www.partners4prevention.org/sites/default/files/resources/socialmedia_final.pdf

Lippert, O. & Richards, J. (2013). The eternal colony: Bangladesh's leaders have still not

    understood the meaning of independence (BANGLADESH). *Inroads: A Journal of*

    Opinion, 33, 131-137.

Liton, S. & Habib, W. B. (2015, September 16). VAT on Bangladesh's English medium schools is discriminatory. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/discrimination-against-kids-143842

Loader, B. D. (2008). Social movements and new media. *Sociology Compass*, *2*(6), 1020-1033.

Loader, B. D., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. A. (2014). The networked young citizen: Social media, political participation and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society*, *17*(2), 143–150. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.871571

Lohani, K. (n.d.). Independent Bangla radio station. Retrieved from http://www.swadhinbangla-betar.org/english/index.html

Luck, L.; Jackson, D. & Usher, K. (2006). Case study: A bridge across the paradigms. *Nursing Inquiry*, *13*(2), 103-109. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1800.2006.00309.x

Lundby, K. (2008). *Digital storytelling: Mediatized stories: Self representations in new media*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Madhavan, E. S. (2016). Internet and social media's social movements leading to new forms of governance and policymaking: Cases from India. Retrieved from http://www.glocalismjournal.net/issues/networks-and-new-media/articles/internet-and-social-medias-social-movements-leading-to-new-forms-of-governance-and-policymaking-cases-from-india.kl

Mahmud, F. (2018, October 8). Bangladesh enacts new law that could silence dissenters. Retrieved from https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/bangladesh-enacts-new-law-that-could-silence-dissenters/

Malinowski, B. (2013). *The family among the Australian Aborigines: A sociological study*. London: University of London Press.

Masud, A. A. (2015, September 22). Private education for public good. Retrieved from

  https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/politics/private-education-public-good-146866

Masuda, R. (2017, March 15). Research shows millennials see activism in different way than

  previous generations. Retrieved from http://www.achieveagency.com/research-shows-

  millennials-see-activism-in-different-way-than-previous-generations/

Matlin, M. (2010). I'll scream later (reprint ed.). New York, NY: Gallery Books.

Mazda Y., Magi, M., Ikeda, Y., Kurokawa, T. & Asano, T. (2006). Wave reduction in a

  mangrove forest. *Sonneratia sp. Wetlands Ecology and Management*, *14*, 365-378.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.).

  San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (2nd ed.). San

  Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mitchell, L. (2009). *Language, emotion, and politics in south India: The making of a mother*

  tongue. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Moitree, R. (2013, December 15). Our National Flag. Retrieved from

  http://www.prothomalo.com/pachmisheli/article/98845

Molokwane, T. & Tshombe, L. M. (2018). *Citizen involvement in the formulation of public*

  policy. Retrieved

  fromhttps://www.researchgate.net/publication/328828793_Citizen_Involvement_in_the_

  Formulation_of_Public_Policy

Morozov, E. (2012). *The net delusion: The dark side of internet freedom*. Public Affairs.

Moscato, D. (2016). Media portrayals of hashtag activism: A framing analysis of Canada's

  #IdlenomoreMovement. *Media and Communication 2 (4),* 3-12.

Moyer, J. (2017, May 8). Political activism on social media has grown some teeth. Retrieved
from https://psmag.com/social-justice/social-media-activism

Murad, M. (2017, April 15). Dhaka ranked second in number of active Facebook users. *The
Dhaka Tribune*. Retrieved from https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2017/04/15/dhaka-
ranked-second-in-number-of-active-facebook-users

Mustafa, S. (2004). Listeners name greatest Bengali. Retrieved from
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3623345.stm

Muslic, H. (2017, June 20). What is slacktivism and is it even helping? Retrieved from
https://nonprofithub.org/social-media/what-is-slacktivism-does-it-help/

NCRI Staff (2018, January 15). Iran protesters evade censorship with internet software.
Retrieved from https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/iran-protests/24170-iran-protesters-
evade-censorship-with-internet-software

Napoli, P. (2007). Public interest media activism and advocacy as a social movement: A review
of the literature. *McGannon Center Working Paper Series*. Retrieved from
https://fordham.bepress.com/mcgannon_working_papers/21

Nasreen, M., Hossain, K. and Kundu, D. (2006). The interrelationship between poverty,
environment and sustainable development in Bangladesh: An overview. *Bangladesh E-
Journal of Sociology*, *3*(2), 1-21.

NBC Nightly News (2017). *Saudi Arabia to end ban on women drivers* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMf4T4hj6VQ

Neuman, W. L. (2005). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*.
Boston, MA: Pearson.

Oberst, R. C., Malik, Y. K., Kennedy, C., Kapur, A., Lawoti, M., Rahman, S., &Ahmad, A. (2014).*Government and politics in South Asia*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Omeni, A. (2017, April 11). The Chibok kidnappings in North-East Nigeria: A military analysis of before and after. *Small Wars Journal*. Retrieved from http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-chibok-kidnappings-in-north-east-nigeria-a-military-analysis-of-before-and-after

Palfrey, J., & Gasser, U. (2010). *Born digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives* (reprint ed.). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Park, N., Kee, K. F., & Valenzuela, S. (2009). Being immersed in social networking environment: Facebook groups, uses and gratifications, and social outcomes. *Cyber Psychology& Behavior*, *12*(6), 729–733. https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2009.0003

Parvanova, D. & Pichler, M. (2013). Editorial: Activism and social movements in South-East Asia. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, *6*(1), 1-6.

Peel, M., Kuchler, H, & Bland, B. (2017, May 24). Southeast Asian censors test mettle of social media groups. Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/c87c4364-3c43-11e7-821a-6027b8a20f23

Peuchaud, S. (2014). Social media activism and Egyptians' use of social media to combat sexual violence: An HiAP case study. *Health Promotion International, 29*(suppl_1), i113-20. Retrieved from http://proxy.lib.utk.edu:90/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ccm&AN=103891264&scope=site

Pixlee (n.d.). Who are social media influencers? Retrieved from https://www.pixlee.com/definitions/definition-social-media-influencer

Prevent Child Abuse in America (2009, May 29). Changing the way we think about prevention. Retrieved from http://preventchildabuseamerica.blogspot.com/2009/05/10-ways-to-engage-with-prevent-child.html#!/2009/05/10-ways-to-engage-with-prevent-child.html

Pousadela, I. (2018, May 4). 2018 points to a new wave of citizen activism. Retrieved from https://www.equaltimes.org/2018-points-to-a-new-wave-of?lang=en#.W67kdHtKi02

Quackenbush, C., Meixler, E., Solomon, F., Regan, H., Hincks, J.,Barron, L. & Haynes, S. (2018, June 21). Press freedom is under attack across Southeast Asia. Meet the journalists fighting back. Retrieved from https://time.com/longform/press-freedom-southeast-asia/

Rafique, A. (2012). Shaheed Minar. In *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh* (2nd ed.). Asiatic Society of Bangladesh. Retrieved from http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Shaheed_Minar

Rees, A. (2015). Digital and online activism. Retrieved from https://en.reset.org/knowledge/digital-and-online-activism

Reporters Without Borders (n.d.). RSF 2020 Index: Asia-Pacific – hyper-control and national-populist excesses. Retrieved from https://rsf.org/en/rsf-2020-index-asia-pacific-hyper-control-and-national-populist-excesses

Riddell, R. C., Robinson, M., Coninck, J. de, Muir, A., & White, S. (2002). *Non-governmental organizations and rural poverty alleviation*. London: Clarendon Press.

Rigby, K. (2008). *Children and bullying: How parents and educators can reduce bullying at school.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Rights Watch (2018, May 9). Bangladesh: Protect freedom of expression. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/05/09/bangladesh-protect-freedom-expression#

Robins, N. (2008, June 27). This imperious company - The East India Company and the modern multinational. Retrieved from https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/this-imperious-company-the-east-india-company-and-the-modern-multinational

Rojas, H., & Puig-i-Abril, E. (2009). Mobilizers mobilized: Information, expression, mobilization and participation in the digital age. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(4), 902–927. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2009.01475.x

Rose, D. (2017, July 26). Trendy social activists prove Instagram is a platform for more than selfies. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/padwxn/trendy-social-activists-prove-instagram-is-a-platform-for-more-than-selfies

Rowley, J. (2002). Using case studies in research. *Management Research News*, *25*(1), 16-27, doi: 10.1108/01409170210782990

Roy, R. K. (2019). Online activism, social movements and mediated politics in contemporary Bangladesh. *Society and Culture in South Asia, 5*(2), 193-215.

Ryan, F. (2014, August 7). Social media means the voices of the disabled can no longer be ignored by those in power. Retrieved from https://www.newstatesman.com/print/node/141234

Sabur, S. (2015,September 16). The possibility of transversal politics. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/politics/the-possibility-transversal-politics-143623

Safi, M. (2017, May 18). Bangladeshi editor who faced 83 lawsuits says press freedom under threat. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/18/it-all-depends-on-how-i-behave-press-freedom-under-threat-in-bangladesh

Salmons, J. (2012). Deep data: Digging into social media with qualitative methods. Retrieved

    from http://nsmnss.blogspot.com/2012/11/deep-data-digging-into-social-media_16.html

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2015). *Research methods for business students*.

    Harlow (Essex): Pearson.

Scarry, J. (n.d.). World beyond war June 2015 social media campaign. Retrieved from

    http://worldbeyondwar.org/world-beyond-war-june-2016-social-media-campaign/

Schramm, W. (1971). *Notes on case studies of instructional media projects*. Working paper for

    the Academy of Educational Development, Washington, DC.

Schechner, S. (2018, Jan. 9). How millions of Iranians are evading the internet censors.

    Retrieved from https://www.wsj.com/articles/iranians-turn-to-tech-tools-to-evade

    internet-censors-1515493800

Shams, S. R. (2017, February 2). Social media trends usages in Bangladesh. *The Asian Age.*

    Retrieved from http://dailyasianage.com/news/46958/social-media-trends-usages-in-

    bangladesh

Sharma, R. (2014, November 12). Social media as a formidable force for change. Retrieved from

    https://www.huffingtonpost.com/ritusharma/power-of-social-media

    dem_b_6103222.html

Simons, H. (2009). *Case study research in practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland. (2016). #SpeakUpCLE campaign against poverty in

    Cleveland. Retrieved from http://socfcleveland.org/Story/speakupcle-campaign-against-

    poverty/

Sliwinski, M. (2016). The evolution of activism: From the streets to social media. Retrieved from

    https://lawstreetmedia.com/issues/politics/evolution-activism-streets-social-media/

Smith, A. (2013, April 25). Civic engagement in the digital age. Retrieved from

      http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/04/25/civic-engagement-in-the-digital-age/

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake, R. E. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York, NY: Guilford.

Star Online Report (2017, December 31). Stories that ruled social media in 2017. Retrieved

      http://www.thedailystar.net/onlinespecial/top-stories-of-2017-that-ruled-social-media-

      allover-bangladesh-bd-and-world-1512832.html

Star Online Report (2018, April 10). No VAT on private universities, PM orders. Retrieved from

      https://www.thedailystar.net/country/no-vat-on-private-universities-prime-minister-

      sheikh-hasina-says-1560829

Star Online Report (2018, October 19). HRW concerned over Bangladesh govt.'s intensive

      surveillance on social media. Retrieved from

      https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/hrw-human-rights-watch-concerned-over-

      bangladesh-government-intensive-surveillance-social-media-

      1649122?utm_source=dailystar_website&utm_campaign=newsalert&utm_medium=new

      surl&utm_term=all&utm_content=all

Stewart, A. (2014). Case study. In Jane Mills & Melanie Birks (Eds.), *Qualitative methodology:*

      A practical guide (pp.145-159). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Swapan, A. (2016, February 21). The first Shahid Minar. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from

      http://www.thedailystar.net/op-ed/the-first-shahid-minar-575251

Tax Policy Center (n.d.). What is VAT? Retrieved from

      https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-vat

Taylor, R. E. (1999). A six segment message strategy wheel. *Journal of Advertising Research, 39*(6), 7-17.

TechTarget (2018, August 8). Millennials (generation Y). Retrieved from https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/millennials-millennial-generation

Telecompaper (2015). Retrieved from https://www.telecompaper.com/research/tpbasics-2015-q3-smartphone-edition--1107453

The Daily Star (2013, March 2). "Shibir man behind blogger killing." Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20130304002828/http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/latest_news.php?nid=45126

The Daily Star (2015, August 14). HC questions VAT on private universities. Retrieved from https://103.16.74.140/country/hc-rule-against-75pc-vat-pvt-universities-124114

The Daily Star (2015, September 10). Universities, not students to pay VAT: Muhith. Retrieved from thedailystar.net/shout/education/vat-pvt-universities-won't-be-withdrawn-muhith-140890

The Daily Star (2015, September 10). Hackers take down Dhaka University website for its "silence" over tuition fee VAT. Retrieved from https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/09/10/hackers-take-down-dhaka-university-website-for-its-silence-over-tuition-fee-vat

The Daily Star (2015, September 11). VAT on tuition fees: Students threaten to continue movement. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/vat-tuition-fees-students-threaten-continue-movement-141502

The Daily Star (2015, September 11). Rising tension in the education sector. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/editorial/rising-tension-the-education-sector-141061

The Daily Star (2015, September 13). VAT protesters lift road blockade for today. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/vat-protesters-lift-road-blockade-today-142489

The Daily Star (2015, September 13). Daylong traffic chaos stops Dhaka. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/daylong-traffic-chaos-stops-dhaka-142471

The Daily Star (2015, September 13). Govt. may review VAT on tuition fees: Muhith. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/govt-may-review-vat-tuition-fees-muhith-142501

The Daily Star (2015, September 13). VAT protesters give flowers to cops, take selfies. Retrieved from http://103.16.74.140/trending-socially/vat-protesters-give-flowers-cops-take-selfies-142486

The Daily Star (2015, September 13). NSU suspends classes, IUB declares Eid vacation, BRAC University to stay closed Monday. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/nsu-suspend-classes-iub-declares-eid-vacation-142477

The Daily Star (2015, September 14). VAT protest on, key Dhaka roads blocked again. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/city/vat-protest-key-dhaka-roads-blocked-again-142885

The Daily Star (2015, September 15). Bangladesh withdraws VAT on tuition fees amid student protests. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/v-no-vat-143461

The Daily Star (2016, January 1). Why 2015 was a good year for Bangladesh. Retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/country/why-2015-was-good-year-bangladesh-195472

The Daily Star (2017, July 19). Section 57 in new garb. Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/government-decides-scrap-section-57-digital-security-act-2017-1498357

Thomas, S. M. (2016, May 30). Pakistani women dare men to "#TryBeatingMeLightly" as a

   protest against the CII bill. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeed.com/soniathomas/try-

   beating-me-lightly?utm_term=.kk91w30El

Tilly, C., & Wood, L. J. (2016). *Social movements 1768-2012*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Tzouvara, M. (2016, March 2). In the age of clicktivism: The use of social media in facilitating

   participation and social change. Retrieved from

   https://wpmu.mah.se/nmict161group2/2016/03/02/in-the-age-of-clicktivism-the-use-of-

   social-media-in-facilitating-participation-and-social-change/

Valenzuela, S. (2013). Unpacking the use of social media for protest behavior: The roles of

   information, opinion expression, and activism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *57*(7),

   920–942. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479375

Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site?:

   Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of

   Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(4), 875–901. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-

   6101.2009.01474.x

Van Biezen, I, Mair, P., & Poguntke, T. (2012). Going, going, … gone? The decline of party

   membership in contemporary Europe. *European Journal of Political Research, 51*(1), 24

   – 56. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2011.01995.x

Verma, S. (2017, November 12). Click for change: When social media became the face of

   protest. Retrieved from https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/click-for-

   change-when-social-media-became-the-face-of-protest/929398/

Wadud, M. (2015, July 1). Anger as tax on private university education agreed. Retrieved from

   https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20150701113036189

Wallace, K. (2015). Teens spend 9 hours a day using media, report says. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/03/health/teens-tweens-media-screen-use-report/index.html

White, M. (2010, August 12). Clicktivism is running leftist activism. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism

Women in the World (2016, May 31). Pakistani women challenge domestic violence bill in #TryBeatingMeLightly campaign. Retrieved from https://womenintheworld.com/2016/05/31/photographer-shows-pakistani-women-challenging-domestic-violence-bill-in-trybeatingmelightly-campaign/

Women, U. (n.d.). Leave no one behind - End violence against women and girls. Retrieved from http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women

Wood, M. A., Bukowski, W. M., & Lis, E. (2016). The digital self: How social media serves as a setting that shapes youth's emotional experiences. *Adolescent research review*, *1*(2), 163–173. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-015-0014-8

World Beyond War June 2015 Social Media Campaign. (2015, June 8). Retrieved from http://worldbeyondwar.org/world-beyond-war-june-2016-social-media-campaign/

Wyse, S. E. (2011). What is the difference between quantitative and qualitative research? Retrieved from https://www.b2binternational.com/research/methods/

Yin, R. K. (2003). Applications of case study research (3rd ed.). *Applied Social Research Methods Series*,(5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Yrjanson, C. (2015, May 15). What is the difference between sales tax and VAT? Retrieved from https://tax.thomsonreuters.com/blog/what-is-the-difference-between-sales-tax-and-vat/

Yuce, S. T., Agarwal, N., Wigand, R. T., Lim, M., & Robinson, R. S. (2014). Bridging women rights networks: Analyzing interconnected online collective actions. *Journal of Global Information Management*, *22*(4), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.4018/jgim.2014100101

Zaber, M. H., Nardi, B., & Chen, J. (2017). A study of hashtag activism for raising awareness about riverbank erosion in Bangladesh. In *Proceedings of the 2017 Workshop on Computing Within Limits* (pp. 51–58). New York, NY, USA: ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3080556.3080557

Zafar, I. (2020, February 14). New social-media bill takes Pakistan another step backward. Retrieved from https://asiatimes.com/2020/02/new-social-media-bill-takes-pakistan-another-step-backward/

Zaman, N. U. (2018, October 18). Digital Security Act 2018: Young generation speaks. Retrieved from https://www.newagebd.net/article/53662/digital-security-act-2018-young-generation-speaks

Zaman, S. (2016, December 31). Looking back: Social media activism in 2016. Retrieved from http://www.thedailystar.net/looking-back/looking-back-social-media-activism-2016-1338298

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Recruiting Message

INTRODUCTION

Hello. I am Umana Anjalin, Doctoral Candidate, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA. For my Ph.D. dissertation topic "No VAT on Education," I would like to interview participants like you who could provide me with valuable insights regarding the study. In this regard, I would like to ask you a number of relevant questions on the topic. This is a private interview and data collected from this interview will be used for academic purposes only without mentioning your name. Your identity will be strictly confidential and the information you will be providing will, under no circumstances be shared with none other than the researcher and in no way will be linked to your identification.

Your in-depth interview will be conducted in a natural setting like a café or a public place an office room or a library where you will feel comfortable to speak with the researcher where privacy could be maintained. With your permission, a voice recorder will be used and the voice recording will be transcribed verbatim before the researcher will analyze the data. If you would not want your voice to be recorded, the researcher will write your spoken words using a pen and paper.

You will need to sign an informed consent form to participate in this study. You may want to withdraw from participating in this study whenever you may wish. The researcher will then not use the information you shall be providing and that data you had provided will be purged and destroyed for good.

Please let me know if you will be willing to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary and without any perceived risk of participation. Please let me know if you would like to participate by verbally agreeing to the researcher's request. The researcher can be reached via uanjalin@vols.utk.edu or you may call her at (865)236-4394.

If you have any further query regarding this study, you may reach the researcher through the abovementioned contact details or may reach the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697.

ABOUT THE STUDY AND ITS PURPOSE

The purpose of the dissertation research project is to collect data about your experiences pertaining to the #NoVATonEducation movement. This interview session is about no VAT on education movement that took place in 2015 online and offline, with special emphasis on social media as a communication tool using the hashtag #NoVatOnEducation. This face-to-face interview should take between 45-60 minutes to complete.

CLOSING

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in taking time out for the researcher in helping her out with her dissertation. The researcher really appreciates your consent to participate. Your wise observations and opinions in this interview will be a valuable contribution in this study. Looking forward to having an insightful contribution through an in-depth interview of approximately one hour time duration at a mutually convenient time and place!

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

[Social Media Portrayals of the Hashtag Activism: A Framing Analysis of Bangladesh's

#NoVATonEducation]

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of the dissertation research

project is to collect data about your experiences pertaining to the #NoVATonEducation

movement.

This interview session is about no VAT on education movement that took place in 2015

online and offline, with special emphasis on social media as a communication tool using the

hashtag #NoVatOnEducation. This face-to-face interview should take between 45-60 minutes to

complete.

Risks

There are not any foreseeable risks, other than those encountered in everyday life, in your

participation in this study.

Benefits

While you will not receive any immediate benefit from taking part in the interview, your

responses will help the readers of this research learn more on social activism, particularly social

media activism in a developing country.

Confidentiality

Your responses are not linked to your identity. All responses will be stored in a secure

online format that will be password protected. The only individuals who will have access to the

raw data will be the Doctoral candidate Umana Anjalin.

Compensation

There is no financial compensation for participating.

_____
Participant's Initials

Contact Information

If you have questions regarding the study or procedures at any point of time, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher, Umana Anjalin at uanjalin@vols.utk.edu). You may contact the University of Tennessee IRB Compliance Officer at utkirb@utk.edu or (865) 974-7697, if you have questions about your rights as a participant for this study.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will not be used in the study nor stored electronically.

CONSENT

By continuing to participate in the interview process you are indicating you have read the consent form and voluntarily agreeing to participate, and that you are at least 18 years of age.

_____   _____

Your Name   *Your Signature*

Date:

Appendix C: Draft Interview Guide 01: Group: University Administrator/Teacher

Method: In-depth Interview

Questions to be asked after getting the informed consent signed from the participants:

1. Please tell me about yourself (your name, your current position, and your position during the #NoVATonEducation movement in 2015).

2. Do you remember what the initial reaction was to the imposition of the new VAT

a) of the teachers?

b) of the university administrators?

c) of the students?

3. Please comment on the following:

a) If the VAT would have been imposed, how do you think this added cost would have been sourced from?

b) What, in your opinion, maybe the reason(s) why the students joined the movement against VAT?

4. Please comment on how the students of your University had taken part in the activism concerning the #NoVATonEducation movement? What was their mode of communication?

a) Offline?

b) Online?

5. Do you feel that the social activism had found a new dimension with the help of social media in making novel changes? If yes...

a) Why?

b) How?

6. Why do you think the government had to finally agree to the student demand of withdrawal of the value-added-tax?

Appendix D: Draft Interview Guide 02: Group: Journalists (News/Media)

Method: In-depth Interview

1. Please tell me about yourself (your name, your current position, and your position during the #NoVATonEducation movement in your workplace, i.e., newspaper/television channel).

2. Tell me about your social media presence online (your engagement with social media) as a journalist.

3. Please comment on the journalistic practice regarding #NoVATonEducation movement in your newspaper/television channel.

4. From your recollection, kindly tell me about your participation in journalism during the #NoVATonEducation movement.

5. Please comment if social media had any facilitating role to play in having a breakthrough in this movement. If 'yes,' why? If 'no,' Why not?

6. Please comment whether social media activism a challenge or an opportunity? Why?

Appendix E: Draft Interview Guide 03 (A): Group: Student Social Activists

Method: In-depth Interview

1. Please tell me about yourself.

2. Please tell me about what you recall regarding the #NoVATonEducation movement.

3. What made/inspired you to take part in this movement? In what capacity?

4. Please tell me about:

a) the offline activism regarding #NoVATonEducation.

b) the online activism regarding #NoVATonEducation.

c) Please comment whether social media played any role in organizing the students for

this movement?

5. Please tell me what may be the role of social media in this movement?

a. For organizing the students

b. For communicating with other stakeholders

c. For other aspects of the movement.

6. While organizing for the movement, did you find any kind of impediments anywhere?

If yes, please tell me about it.

7.What do you think were your contribution and your achievement in the movement?

Appendix F: Draft Interview Guide 03 (B): Group: Social Activists Student Leaders

Method: In-depth Interview

1. Why do you think #NoVATonEducation campaign played out successfully on the SM?

2. What in your opinion you remember, were the milestones during this particular activism campaign?

3. What crucial tools became evident at different points of time and please elaborate why these became critical?

4. What media tools, in your opinion, amplified this social campaign, at what point of time, and why? (May refer to the placards, posters, drama/skits, bandanas, songs, or any other tools for this campaign).

5. Please comment about the role of memes in this campaign.

6. Can you recall any social media posts of #NoVATonEducation that had gone viral? If yes, why or what may be the reason do you think it had gone viral?

7. Please tell me about the offline activism on this campaign.

8. Please tell me about any campus visits you made during the #NoVATonEducation campaign.

9. Could you remember anything unique about this #NoVATonEducation Campaign (For e.g., Street Drama/Flash Mob, etc.)?on

10. What hurdles or challenges, do you think you had faced during this campaign? How you (or the other students) could overcome these challenges?

11. Who, in your opinion, were the crucial social media influencers in this activism campaign and what role they had played?

Appendix G: Draft Interview Guide 04: Group: Non-student Social Activists

Method: In-depth Interview

1. Please tell me about yourself.

2. What do you remember about the #NoVATonEducation movement? Please comment on:

a) the government's stance regarding the imposition of VAT on education in 2015.

b) what could be the students' angle regarding the VAT imposition on private university education in the country in 2015?

c) your stance regarding the #NoVATonEducation movement.

3. Please comment on the role of social media in this movement:

a) If you think social media had some sort of a positive role in this movement, what added impetus, do you feel social media has provided here?

b) What was your role in this movement as a social media activist?

4. Please reflect on your posts on social media regarding the #NoVATonEducation.

5. How important was social media in achieving the goals of the #NoVATonEducation movement?

VITA

Umana Anjalin is a doctoral candidate in the College of Communication and Information, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, USA. She also had done her second Masters in Communication and Information with Advertising major from the same school. Umana also has an MBA and a BBA from the Institute of Business Administration, which is the top Business school in her home country, Bangladesh. She is an Assistant Professor on study leave from the Department of Business Administration at the University of Asia Pacific in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Umana also was a Research Assistant at the University of Tennessee's Advertising and Public Relations program while she had done her second Masters.

Umana has more than eight years of teaching experience. She has taught Business Communication and Marketing Communication courses in the Bachelors and Masters programs at her home country and also co-taught graduate and undergraduate Social Media course in the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Umana has years of research and professional experience. Her research interest is in social media activism, communication theories, Asian students, and culture shock. She also has industry experience in sales, marketing, and public relations at Sheraton Hotel in Bangladesh. Umana has two book chapters to her credit from the USA. Umana has multiple scholarships in her repertoire from the University of Tennessee's honors convocations. She has numerous international conference papers and journal articles in Business and Communications. She is well-traveled and enthusiastically maintains her travel blog site that has gone viral.